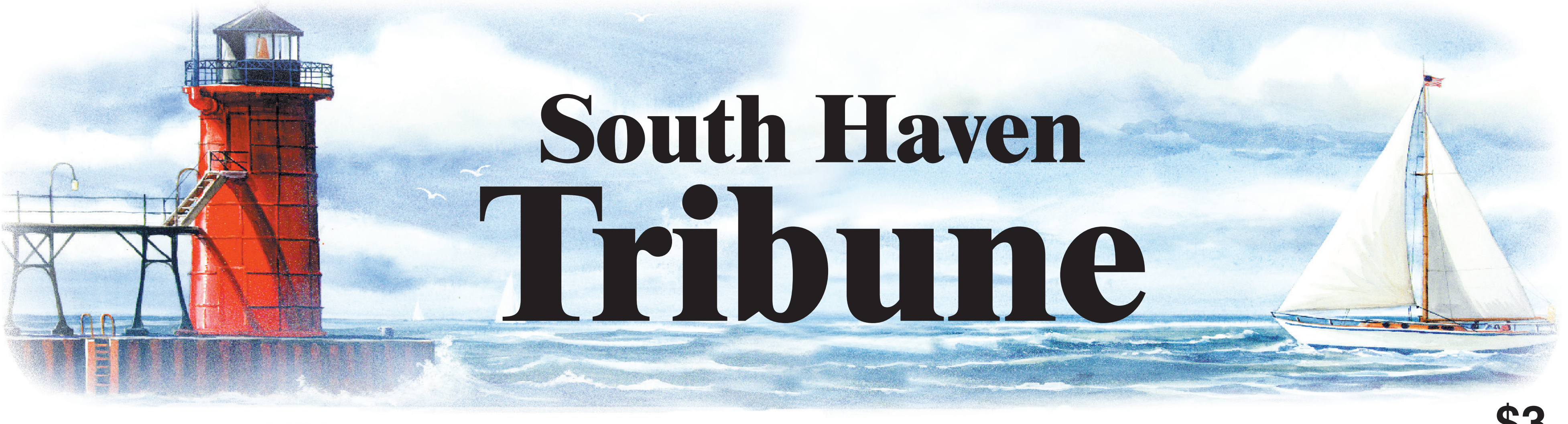


South Haven Tribune

$3

November 23, 2025

South Haven lifeguard program to return

Council approves phased approach, looking for funds

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven is on the cusp of resuscitating its lifeguard program by the start of this summer.

Representatives from Double Haul Solutions presented a lifeguard program proposal with estimated costs, staffing, equipment and funding options during Monday's city council meeting.

"The purpose of our discussion tonight is to show that, if council wanted to move forward, it can be done and what we put in front of you is our recommendations on how it could be done and how it could be done successfully," Double Haul Solutions Founder and CEO Nate Geinzer said.

In the presentation, they gave a sample of a phased timeline that would begin with the city council's approval and city staff would start implementing the systems, begin hiring the staff and buying equipment.

Phase one is focused on having South Beach staffed and running by Memorial Day of 2026.

In phase one, Double Haul recommended having a beach safety director/chief lifeguard, a deputy beach safety director, two supervising lifeguards, six regular lifeguards and three optional part-time lifeguards.

The estimated cost for the first full season in phase one of the program is $481,916.

In phase two, the North and South beaches would be staffed for the 2028 through 2030 seasons.

For phase two, they recommended adding a third supervising lifeguard, having 18 to 24 regular lifeguards, and adding three more optional part-time lifeguards.

For phase two, the first full season's estimated cost is $547,440.

In phase three, both beaches will be fully staffed and incorporate a junior lifeguard program.

In phase four, the program goal is to be fully USLA certified on both beaches and continue to grow the program.

City Attorney Dave Eberle discussed during the meeting the possible legal issues and liability with a lifeguard program; not just with a possible drowning, but the possibility of a person being injured while being saved.

"There is a much greater chance of a drowning if there are no lifeguards," Council Member Joe Reeser said. "So, you're going to have litigations either way without lifeguards if there's a drowning."

Council Member Jeff Arnold said he was concerned about the unanswered questions about the program, which included the cost, a funding source that is predictable and sustainable, and deciding on whether the program should be done in phases or all at once.

To cover the cost of the program, Double Haul gave

See LIFEGUARDS, page A2

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

South Haven Interim Police Chief Adam DeBoer learned how to catch and toss pizza dough from across the room during Papa Johns grand opening.

Papa Johns returns to South Haven

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Papa Johns recently kicked off its opening weekend with its "Pizzapalooza" fundraiser for the South Haven area police and fire crews.

The grand opening began with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at their new location at 359 Broadway St., which was previously the Family Video store.

The ceremony included free tours of the store, pizza slices and Papa Johns merchandise.

"The mission statement with Bajco Group and Papa Johns is all about being part of the community," Papa Johns Marketing Director Mary Ziola-Vega said. "We're not here just to be a big box selling pizza; we're here to be the neighborhood pizza place."

One way Ziola-Vega said they like to get involved in the community is to host a fundraiser for their grand opening.

"Every opening we do, we do a fundraiser, because our biggest month usually is a fundraiser and we try to find someone that doesn't really get that opportunity," Ziola-Vega said. "We always kick it off for a police fundraiser or a firefighter fundraiser."

Papa Johns hosted a fundraiser for the South Haven area police and fire departments as part of their "Pizzapalooza" grand opening.

The fundraiser will raise money for a wellness program for the South Haven Police Department and South Haven Area Emergency Services.

"The fundraiser we are doing is for a wellness program," Interim Chief Adam DeBoer said. "The SHAES and the police department are starting a chaplaincy program and with that we get an assigned chaplain who is also a therapist

See PIZZA, page A2

SH council adjusts short-term rental fees

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council approved an amendment to the fee schedule for the city's short-term rental program.

The change to the fees comes from concerns from residents who were confused about where the fees are coming from and the belief that the fees were building up a fund balance.

"We went back through and had a look at the fees that were charged and what we did find is that when we were estimated these fees in July, we were estimating four hours of legal time, just for the zoning compliance determination," City Manager Kate Hosier said.

The proposed fee for zoning compliance determination would be reduced from $900 to $450.

After a review of the zoning compliance determination, Hosier said four hours is no longer needed due to the city staff streamlining some items from the determination process and has been reduced to two hours.

The amended fee schedule also clarifies that an initial zoning compliance fee is not charged to properties that receive special land use approval.

Other amendments to the fee schedule include a reduced fee for subsequent zoning compliance determination from $250 to $50 and the removal of the escrow component for appeal hearings.

Other items

City council approved an amendment to the electric utility rates for an additional state mandated energy waste reduction rate.

"These are a part of a slew of bills that came out recently with Michigan

See COUNCIL, page A2

SH school board accepts bids for armory renovation

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven school board approved 23 bids for the Michigan State Armory renovation project.

Director of Non-Instructional Services Kevin Dee said demolition has already begun, but they are not planning on demolishing the whole building.

During last month's meeting, the board approved a demolition bid of $99,300.

The building is set to be repurposed and used as administration and transportation offices. Included in the plans will be a fenced-in parking lot for the buses, maintenance bays, storage and offices.

The armory was built in 1923 and bought by the district around 2011.

Data breach

The school board approved the PowerSchool Litigation Resolution during Wednesday's meeting.

In December of 2024, there was a data breach of the PowerSchool application which is a unified student information system that tracks student data, such as grades and attendance.

"The main issue is there is still potential risk," said Nancy Nelson, who is the district's chief financial officer.

A class-action lawsuit was made and the district decided to go along with the lawsuit.

"We believe there's more benefit to us moving ahead with the lawsuit," Nelson said.

See BOARD, page A2

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

6 94653 00027 4

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Papa Johns kicked off its grand opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony at its new location, which was previously the Family Video store.

PIZZA

From page A1

trained for traumatic events and just kind of general counseling."

DeBoer said first responders have an average of 3.5 traumatic events over their career every six months.

"It's one way that Chief (Brandon) Hinz and I can kind of help our guys deal with some of the stuff that we deal with on a daily or weekly basis," DeBoer said.

The Community Pizzapalooza fundraiser took place on Saturday and included, behind-the scenes-tours of the store, free pizza slices and a head-to-head pizza challenge where member of the police and fire departments made pizzas and auctioned them off to see who had the best pizza.

Another way they are getting involved in the community is by sponsoring the South Haven robotics team.

"We were looking for someone to have a VIP party with and everyone kept talking about them and our director of operations is a drone freak," Ziola-Vega said. "They started talking about how they loved drones, how everyone got together and one thing led to another and we're like, 'we'll sponsor you guys.'"

Papa Johns is open from 9:30 a.m. to midnight Monday through Thursday and from 9:30 a.m. to one a.m. Friday through Sunday.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Papa Johns employees taught South Haven area police and fire crew members how to make a pizza.

LIFEGUARDS

From page A1

several recommendations, which included increasing the beach parking fees to $3 an hour, no longer giving South Haven residents free parking passes, increasing property taxes, a special millage, cuts to services or capital investments, tourism funding and sponsorships.

Mayor Annie Brown said she was hesitant about cutting costs that could negatively impact the police and fire departments, affordable housing projects and infrastructure projects.

"We can't make a decision on those details right now, but we can make a decision, hopefully tonight, whether we want lifeguards," Reeser said.

The council approved city staff to work to create a funding strategy, implement the system, processes and hiring practices for phase one of the lifeguard program.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

COUNCIL

From page A1

legislature that are asking for more energy waste reduction," Hosier said.

During a previous meeting, the city council approved the utility rates for the city for the next three years. However, Public Works Director Dana Burd said at that time they did not know the full extent of the regulations for energy waste reduction.

"There's a new law in place that requires municipal utilities, such as South Haven, to participate in this program," Burd said. "It's a program that's been established for investor-owned utilities and some municipals have opted into it, but South Haven has not had it for several years."

To participate, there will be an additional rate on the electric utility that would be a customer pass-through based on usage for residential, commercial and industrial customers.

Burd said this program is a four-year commitment.

City council approved a standard pole attachment license agreement and delegate authority to sign license agreements with licensees.

"This is mostly related to communication companies that want to attach to our electric utility poles," Burd said.

The city provides the infrastructure and the communication companies can lease space on it.

The agreement includes an annual charge for the providers that reflects the true cost of being on the city's infrastructure.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

BOARD

From page A1

Other items

The board approved a first reading of the Neola policy updates.

Superintendent Ana Aleman-Putman said the updates included some language changes and updating staffing. The board will read through the updates and then it will be brought back at the next meeting to be discussed and approved.

The board also approved the hiring of Amy Cockburn as the high school principal.

Marley Holbrook from Baseline Middle School was chosen for this month's student pride awards. The staff pride award was given to Lori Schooley who is a second-grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary School.

Pride awards are presented once a month during the school board meetings to at least one South Haven student and staff member. Pride awards are a tradition the school has done for more than 12 years to honor those who have shown excellence in academics and character.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

OBITUARY

Mary Ann Hard

Mary, age 84, was born to Onotiyoh "Dutch" and Leona Dunn of Gobles, Mich. A second daughter, she lived in Van Buren County most of her life.

Her life of working began early with picking blueberries, detasseling corn, babysitting and later working in greenhouses. Later she worked at Bethany Nursing Home for Dr. R.W. Spalding on private duty.

At the age of 21, Mary got married to Marion Loyd Hard. They had two children whom survive. A daughter, Virginia Belle Hentschel of Fennville, Mich. and a son, Loyd E. Hard and his wife Karen Marie Hard of Hersey, Mich.

Upon raising her children, Mary worked as a teachers' aid from 1969 to 1970 for Bloomingdale Schools. Mary then worked at Michigan Fruit Canners in South Haven and Fennville for some time until heart problems retired her from the job.

She still worked at Martin Luther King Memorial Nursing Home as a certified nurse attendant until health problems required her to quit.

Mary is also survived by four grandchildren; Juanita Hentschel, Jay D. Hentschel II, Jessica Hentschel, Jeremy Hentschel; great grandchildren, Dakota McMullin, Dylan Conant, Jared Hentschel, Andrea Guzman, Dominic Guzman, Isaac Guzman along with four great-great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband Marion Hard, her parents; sisters, Nancy Rhoades, Leona Morehouse; and her brothers, Melvin Dunn, Alvin Dunn and Martin Dunn.

The family will meet friends at 10 a.m. until the funeral service at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 18 at the Bloomingdale Chapel, D. L. Miller Funeral Home. Interment will follow in Robinson Cemetery.

www.dlmillerfuneralhome.com.

Visit us online for exclusive content and photos!
www.southhaventribune.net

Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Representatives from Dwelling Place presented the final plans to the South Haven community during a public session Monday for the Overton redevelopment project.

Dwelling Place discuss next steps for Overton project

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Dwelling Place officials presented updates and answered questions on the Overton project this week, which was attended by members of the South Haven community.

Monday's session marked the final of three public engagement meetings the company held for the housing project that has been years in the making.

Dwelling Place Director of Community Building Engagement Latrishia Sosebee and Land Acquisition and Development Analyst Matt Szuminski spoke during the meeting.

"What we're showing today is the final designs," Sosebee said. "What we are planning to take forward and submit to the city next week."

The site plan for the Overton project includes two components – multi-family rental and community land trust homeownership.

For multi-family renting, the plan is to have a three-story apartment building with 53 one- and two-bedroom apartments with 60 to 80 parking spots along with building amenities including a community room, rooftop garden and leasing office. Each building will have key card access to enter.

"At this time, we are only discussing the south side of the entire project, so the multi-family portion of it," Szuminski said. "The CLT (community land trust) portion, we are still planning on developing that, but the big push right now is the low-income housing tax credit application that we will be submitting on April 1."

For homeownership, the proposal includes 20 total homes with 10 duplexes and two single-family homes. The homes will be two stories tall with three to four bedrooms, up to two bathrooms, a driveway and a garage.

Szuminski said the funding for the apartments and the single-family homes have two different sources which have separate application processes. The focus now will be on the apartments, but he said they will continue to work on what is needed for the single-family homes to be developed.

A few community members brought up the environmental concerns of the property Monday.

"We have an environmental consultant that's working with us," Szuminski said. "They're bringing MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority) and us together to start talking about this, because we can't touch the site until MSHDA and EGLE (Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) look at everything that we produce and give us the thumbs up."

The next step in the project is to submit the final plans to the city of South Haven on Nov. 24. After that, the project would need to secure approval from the South Haven Planning Commission during the Jan. 8, 2026 meeting.

If the plans are approved in both meetings, developers can then send all the necessary paperwork to MSHDA and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit for funding approval on April 1, 2026.

If approved for funding, they will close the deal and begin construction.

For more information and to keep up to date on the project, go to dpgr.org.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Tribune file photo

Demolition work at the former Overton factory is shown above in 2015. The condemned factory building was demolished by the city of South Haven, which plans to use the site for affordable housing.

City leadership reviews code of conduct

Attorney: Document covers broad range of subjects

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council reviewed a proposed code of conduct created by an ad hoc committee during a special meeting this week.

"This all started because of some issues that came up early on in our time here as a council and we spent a lot of time working on this," Council Member George Sleeper said Monday.

This committee's creation stemmed from a couple incidents that occurred during two previous city council meetings.

The incident that took place in 2024 referred to a statement that was made by Mayor Annie Brown regarding the nomination to appoint Council Member Mary Hosley to the city's planning commission. Brown alleged it was a planned appointment because of a personal agenda by the council members.

The incident in 2025 referred to a heated discussion between council members when Brown brought up controversial language related to the LGBTQ+ community that was used in previous language for the short-term rental ordinance. During that meeting, Brown attempted to apologize to the community for the language used in the ordinance. Hosley commented that the controversial language was not included in her proposed ordinance draft.

"It's unfortunate, because I'm going to be done in two more meetings and I will walk away from this city council feeling less than fulfilled, because of the atmosphere that's been conducted for the last year and three quarters and it all started that night," Council Member Joe Reeser said. "It changed everything. We didn't always agree with the city council before that, but we all got along and respected each other. I've never heard insulting comments like that before."

During Monday's meeting, Sleeper said that because several of the council members will be finishing their terms soon, it might be better to leave it to the new council to decide what to do with the proposed code of conduct.

"I just think that the problem, the reason we had to do this was because of this council, so I think that it should be this council who approves this," Council Member Latisha Wilkins said.

Council Member Mary Hosley said that proposed draft could still use some minor work, including removing the section about conflict of interest because it is already addressed in the city's charter.

City Attorney Dave Eberle said he was unsure of what the proposed draft is supposed to be, because it covers a broad range of subjects.

"It's still my understanding that the direction from this body was originally just to have it be a very simple code of conduct for city council members and this document is more than that," Eberle said.

After discussion, the city council agreed to have the city attorney's office pare down the document to one page and bring it back to the city council for approval during the Dec. 15 meeting.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

SH to host Holiday in the Park event

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — To celebrate the holiday season, South Haven will host the annual Holiday in the Park event on Nov. 28.

According to a news release, there will be a wide variety of holiday themed activities taking place throughout the afternoon and evening.

"Southwest Michigan transforms into something truly special during the holiday season, and we're eager to celebrate that with our neighbors," Executive Director of Visit South Haven Jennifer Sistrunk said in the release. "Our annual Holiday in the Park event will be a full day of festivities, with something wonderful for all ages to enjoy!"

This year's event schedule includes:

■ Mistletoe Market at the South Haven Center for the Arts from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

■ Corewell Health Hospice Luminary Stroll from noon to 8 p.m.

■ Snow Globe Ornament Making at the South Haven Center for the Arts from 2 to 4 p.m.

■ Claus and Paws Holiday Parade at 4:30 p.m.

■ Tree Lighting Ceremony at City Hall at 5:30 p.m.

■ Reindeer Ranch, S'mores Station, and Pictures with Santa at Dyckman Park at 5:30 p.m.

For more information, go to the Holiday in the Park website.

"Representing both South Haven and Van Buren County, Visit South Haven represents and supports their local lodging partners through efforts to bring additional tourism to the area," the release stated. "As a community partner, Visit South Haven uses their funds to support community enhancement projects that make their hometown a better place to live, play and work for locals and visitors alike."

For more information about Visit South Haven, go to southhaven.org.

SH traffic shifts for fiber internet work

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The City of South Haven recently announced that traffic shifts will occur along certain roads due to fiber internet construction.

According to a news release, the construction will affect traffic for several days until the Michigan Department of Transportation authorizes removal of the traffic control.

The roads affected include:

■ Phoenix Street and Blue Star Highway – During the week of Nov. 24, traffic will be shifted for road deck replacement.

■ LeGrange Street (M-140) and Aylworth Avenue – Then during the week of Nov. 24, traffic will be shifted for road deck replacement.

"These traffic shifts are necessary to allow for fiber installation and restoration of the roadway," the release stated.

The schedule may change subject to weather and other unforeseen conditions.

"Please use caution when traveling in these areas," the release stated.

For more information, contact the South Haven Department of Public Works at 269-637-0737.

Economists say Michigan is in slow patch, but will pick up alongside U.S. by 2027

By SUMMER BALLENTINE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Softened tariffs and tax cuts are expected to boost both the Michigan and national economies with growth expected by 2027 at the latest, according to a new report by University of Michigan economists.

But import taxes and other policy under President Donald Trump will create some short-term pain for Michigan, researchers wrote in the 2026-2027 Michigan Economic Outlook report.

"Interpreting all of the official and unofficial data, we believe the state economy has hit a growth pause this fall, which we expect to persist through most of next year," according to the Michigan report. "The better news is that we believe the economic policy mix has recently become more supportive for Michigan, and we expect growth to pick up in 2027."

Economists have rosier expectations for the U.S. economy as a whole.

"Moderate tax cuts, less restrictive monetary policy, and the end of the shutdown will set the economy on a steadier growth path by early next year," researchers wrote.

The University of Michigan experts couched optimistic predictions with a big caveat: "With the data blackout thanks to the longest federal government shutdown, assessing an already complicated economy feels more like reading tea leaves this time."

Michigan will be up 36,700 payroll jobs this year, economists estimated. The state will be down 2,000 jobs next year before 11,300 are added in 2027 "as tax cuts work their way through the economy, interest rates decline modestly, and a more supportive policy mix begins to kick in."

The economists predict 2.4 percent growth in the U.S. real gross domestic product next year, then 2 percent growth in 2027. The unemployment rate will rise slightly, then remain stable through 2027, according to the report.

"Our outlook for Michigan's economy may seem underwhelming, but these sorts of projections are likely to become the norm in the years to come unless there are fundamental changes to demographic trends," the economists wrote. "We have cautioned for years that Michigan's aging and slowly growing population would eventually put a speed limit on job creation. In our judgment, that long-term future has now arrived."

Trump's repeal of electric-vehicle friendly policy "will cost Michigan jobs in the short run," economists wrote, but the end of greenhouse gas limits on vehicles "ought to boost the Detroit Three's share of the auto market over the longer term."

"Likewise, we have not been shy in sharing our previous estimates that the Trump Administration's tariff policy would end up reducing employment in Michigan's auto sector. Yet recent changes such as the extension of rebates on parts tariffs for domestically assembled vehicles have shifted our estimate of the tariffs' eventual impact on domestic auto production from a small negative to a small positive," economists wrote. "Of course, these policy changes come at a cost: the tariffs will raise vehicle prices for consumers, while the elimination of CAFE standards will lead to higher vehicle emissions."

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Desk: 1-855-317-4292
Hours: Monday - Friday 9am-2pm EST

monster

0100 ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE BUY JUNK CARS!
DAMAGED? TOTALED?
BROKEN? NOT RUNNING?
WRECKED?

CALL 269-500-1711

0500 MERCHANDISE

MOTORCYCLES & SNOWMOBILES WANTED
$$ CASH PAID $$
ALL MAKES AND MODELS

269-500-1711

Sell your unwanted items quickly with a classified ad.

Van Buren State Park Bidding for Drink & Snack Vending Concession Operator

Make the outdoors your office! The Department of Natural Resources is seeking a qualified vendor to provide **Drink and Snack Vending** concession services at Van Buren State Park. The qualified vendor will be required to provide all equipment, personnel, and products. Obtain a bid packet at www.michigan.gov/StateParkConcessions. Contact 269-355-2614 for additional information. Bids are due January 20, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

IN RE: THE MATTER OF: TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR **THE PROPOSED ADOPTION OF:** SUNAMIR RIDER-EL **DOB:** 09/06/2021 Minor Child. **CASE NO.:** FMCE-25-018325

NOTICE OF ACTION FOR TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS AND STEPPARENT ADOPTION

TO: MERCEDES GANT

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that a Petition for Termination of Parental Rights has been filed against you regarding the above-referenced male child, Sunamir Rider-El. DOB 9/6/21. You are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to Juliana Gaita, Esq. of Juliana Gaita, P.A. whose address is 2500 N. Military Trail Ste. 303, Boca Raton, FL 33431 on or before the below hearing date and file the original with the Clerk of this Court at, Broward County Courthouse, 201 SE 6th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301, before service on Petitioner or immediately thereafter. **If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.**

You are required to appear before The Honorable Judge Yael Gamm on **December 8, 2025**, at 10:30 am or as soon after as the matter may be called at the Broward County Courthouse, via Zoom: https://17thflcourts.zoom.us/j/697041821 Meeting ID: 697 041 821 for a Final Termination of Parental Rights hearing.

FAILURE TO APPEAR AT THIS HEARING CONSTITUTES CONSENT TO THE TERMINATION OF THE PARENTAL RIGHTS OF YOUR RIGHTS TO THE CHILD. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR ON THE DATE AND TIME SPECIFIED YOU MAY LOSE ALL LEGAL RIGHTS TO THE CHILD WHOSE INITIALS APPEAR ABOVE

Mercedes Gant physical description is a black female, dob 12/23/99. Brown eyes, brown hair approximately 5'6 and approximately 150 pounds.

If you fail to file a written response and/or appear at the hearing, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.

This notice shall be published once a week for four consecutive weeks in Broward County, Florida and Van Buren County, Michigan

WITNESS my hand and the seal of said court on October 28, 2025, Broward County, Florida.

Clerk Name: Brenda D. Foreman
As clerk, Circuit Court, Broward County, FL

Juliana Gaita, Esq.
Attorney for Petitioner
2500 N. Military Trail, Ste. 303 Boca Raton, FL 33431
phone (561)869-3703

0900 LEGALS

Meeting Synopsis
Casco Township Board Meeting
Monday, November 17th, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: -Overhiser called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and led in The Pledge of Allegiance.
PRESENT: -Overhiser, Clevenger, Ridley, Campbell & Fleming.
ITEMS APPROVED: - Boundary Line Adjustment for Wilson
-2026 Road Proposal
-Bank Rec through Seigfried & Crandall
ADJOURNMENT:
Allan Overhiser, Casco Supervisor
Rachel Ridley, Casco Clerk

Sell Your [car icon] In The Classifieds!

SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP SYNOPSIS
REGULAR MEETING NOVEMBER 12, 2025

PRESENT: Poole, Bertorelli, Wiatrowski, Lewandowski, DeGrandchamp, Stein
ABSENT: Fisher
Motion to approve October 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.
Chief Brandon Hinz gave a report for SHAES. **Gayle Gladney** reported for VBC Commission.
Motion to approve the Agenda.
Trustee Poole reported that the final approval is coming before the Planning Commission next week for the apartments on 73rd Street. **Trustee Wiatrowski** reported that there are 4 inspections left to do for STR. **Supervisor Stein** reported that Granicus will be implemented online by 12/22.
Motion to Adopt Resolution 25-29 to Adopt Ordinance #171 a rezoning on 73.5 Street.
Motion to open the Public Hearing for the 2026 Budget.
Clerk Bertorelli explained budgeting process and pointed out highlights. New in this budget is support of the local Domestic Violence Coalition. This is a balanced budget. There were no questions from the audience.
Motion to close the Public Hearing.
Motion to adopt Resolution 25-30 to Approve the 2026 Budget.
Motion to approve a Memorandum of Understanding and start to recycle Styrofoam at the transfer station. Kalli Marshall from Van Buren County Conservation District was in attendance.
Reports were received. W.C.Askew from the Road Commission was in attendance.
Motion to approve payment of bills in the amount of $59,912.60.
Meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Brenda Bertorelli, Clerk

PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICES

To place a public notice, please send your requests to **legals@pmginmi.com.**

Please allow 48 hours to process, larger legals may need at least four business days.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH HAVEN NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE NO. 171, ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP TO REZONE 73.5 ST PROPERTY

To the residents and property owners of the Charter Township of South Haven, Van Buren County, Michigan, and all other interested persons:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that at its regular meeting on November 12, 2025, the Township Board adopted Ordinance No. 171 entitled "Ordinance Amending The Zoning Ordinance Of South Haven Charter Township To Rezone 73rd St Property." The following is a summary of the regulatory effect of the Ordinance. A true copy of the Ordinance is available for inspection or purchase at the Township Hall, 09761 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven, Michigan 49090 during regular business hours.

ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP TO REZONE 73.5 ST PROPERTY

Section 1. Purpose. This section provides the purpose of the Ordinance.

Section 2. Amending Zoning District Map. This section amends the Zoning District Map to change the CSC (Community Service Commercial) symbol and indication shown on the zoning map for the following real property:

Parcel No.
80-17-011-01-01 & 80-17-011-032-60
73rd St

COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER POST OF SECTION 11, TOWN 1 SOUTH, RANGE 17 WEST, CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN; THENCE SOUTH 00°21'10" EAST (RECORDED AS SOUTH 00°21'30" EAST) ALONG THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION, 812.31 FEET TO THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN AND SOUTH HAVEN TOWNSHIP LINE, SAID LINE DESCRIBED AS BEING 812.31 FEET SOUTH OF AND PARALLEL TO THE NORTH SECTION LINE, AND THE PLACE OF BEGINNING; THENCE NORTH 88°04'12" EAST ALONG SAID LINE, 250.06 FEET TO THE WEST RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF I-196; THENCE SOUTH 29°43'57" EAST (RECORDED AS SOUTH 29°44'14" EAST) ALONG SAID RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE, 89.26 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 22°38'12" EAST, 184.38 FEET (RECORDED AS SOUTH 22°36'50" EAST, 184.45 FEET); THENCE SOUTH 10°17'40" EAST, 123.44 FEET (RECORDED AS SOUTH 10°16'46" EAST, 123.58 FEET); THENCE NORTH 88°02'26" EAST (RECORDED AS NORTH 88°06'00" EAST), 10.13 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00°01'50" WEST, 791.50 FEET (RECORDED AS SOUTH 00°01'22" WEST, 791.34 FEET), ALL ALONG SAID RIGHT-OF-WAY; THENCE SOUTH 88°06'18" WEST, 389.96 FEET (RECORDED AS SOUTH 88°06'50" WEST, 390.08 FEET) TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SECTION 11; THENCE NORTH 00°21'10" WEST (RECORDED AS NORTH 00°21'10" WEST), 1164.79 FEET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 9.98 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

to HDR (High Density Residential) Planned Unit Development. Corresponding HDR PUD regulations and land uses are hereby established for the above-described property.

Section 3. Validity and Severability. This section provides that any section or subsection not expressly amended by this Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect. Should any portion of this Ordinance be found invalid for any reason, such holding shall not be construed as affecting the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

Section 4. Repealer Clause. This section provides that any ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed only to the extent necessary to give this Ordinance full force and effect.

Section 5. Effective Date. This section provides that this Ordinance shall take effect seven days after publication as provided by law.

Brenda Bertorelli, Clerk South Haven Township Hall
09761 Blue Star Memorial Hwy, South Haven, MI 49090
(269)637-3305

RESERVE THIS SPACE TODAY!

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS!

LMC postpones decision on presidential search

Special committee seeks more policy, contract data

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
For the Tribune

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Citing a need to gather additional contract and policy data, a search committee is postponing a final decision on Ken Flowers's candidacy for the Lake Michigan College presidency until next month.

LMC Board Trustee John Grover broke that news during Monday's regular meeting, where he updated his colleagues on the progress toward finding a successor for Trevor Kubatzke – who recently announced plans to retire by December 2026.

Grover is also the chairman of the search committee, which continues to evaluate whether it'll continue with its only declared candidate, Flowers, or open a nationwide search – and begin looking at other candidates. Secretary Mark Weber and Trustee Mary Jo Tomasini are the other members.

The committee met with the full board before Monday's meeting and reviewed their progress, but didn't reach any definite conclusions, he added.

"We had a full and vociferous discussion," Grover said. "We felt, at the end of two hours, we really need a little bit more data, and we'll be reaching out to the proper constituents and authorities to get that information. At this point, the committee and the board have not made a decision."

Kubatzke has led the college since 2017. Flowers, LMC's executive vice president, has served in many different positions since he started there in 1997, as a part-time machining and manufacturing instructor in 1997.

Some of his former roles include serving as dean of career and workforce education, director of workforce training and development, and chairman of the technology department.

The search committee wants to review Kubatzke's contract, "to see how that was structured, so we can really put together the best package that we can come up with," Grover said afterward. "We just didn't have enough agreement across the board, that we wanted to appoint Ken, at this point, nor did we want to go for the full search. We're balancing our options."

Another issue is the mechanics of planning the presidential transition, which will mean a review of the relevant policies that govern it, Grover said.

"We wanted to start fleshing out what that looks like," Grover said. "Once (a new president is) appointed, we figure that it's 60 to 90 days – (including) intros to the right people in the area, the right politicians."

Flowers would already be up to speed on those types of things, in light of his longtime tenure at the college – while the process would look decidedly different for a newcomer to the job, Grover said.

But Grover doesn't think another special meeting will be necessary, once the committee gets the latest information it needs. He expects the board to make a final decision next month.

"I know it sometimes feels frustrating – I'm a little bit frustrated, but I respect the attention to detail the board is putting into this. It's the most important decision this board will make," Grover said. "I mean, the selection committee has had a chance to meet, but this is the first time since October that the committee's had a chance to meet with the board, and really get them up to speed on everything."

LMC has been working with The Pauly Group, an Illinois-based consulting firm, to help guide the search, which has gone through a series of reviews.

Flowers has appeared before the board to outline his vision for LMC, on which he's expounded at a series of forums with faculty, staff and students, as well as the Presidential Cabinet, and members of the public.

FIRE CONSUMES GARAGE IN SOUTH HAVEN

Photo provided / Tom Renner

South Haven Area Emergency Services extinguished a fire that consumed a garage in South Haven. Children playing with combustible materials are believed to be the cause of the fire.

South Haven playwright wins Acorn tournament

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven playwright Linda LaRocque, recently won first place in the 2025 Acorn Spectacular Tournament of Playwrights Finals.

According to a news release, LaRocque's one act play entitled "The Magic Kingdom" won during the finals at the Acorn in Three Oaks, Mich.

"The Magic Kingdom tells the tale of three senior men exploring how to spend their remaining years; going up to Tip Top Town in the U.P. or to Florida senior villages where the women outnumber the men ten to one," the release stated. "Should they go for one final 'fling' risking its consequences?"

Before it's winning performance at the Acorn, the play debuted at the Van Buren Senior Center with Bill Growden, Jim Marcoux and George Ebright.

Among LaRoque's collection of plays is her holiday play "A Christmas Gathering" that was recently presented by the Storytellers Senior Readers Theater at the Van Buren County Senior Center in South Haven.

"The play celebrates the coming together of strangers who didn't believe they had much in common until they share a remarkable Christmas gathering," the release stated.

Paint the plow program engages middle school students

By TRIBUNE STAFF

LAWRENCE — Area middle school students recently participated in the second annual Paint the Plow outreach program and opened voting on the plows to the public.

According to a news release, the Van Buren County Road Commission developed the program to promote winter driving safety and general road safety, as well as to create awareness of transportation career opportunities.

The public can vote on the painted plows from five participating middle schools including:

- ■ Bloomingdale Middle School
- ■ Decatur Middle School
- ■ Gobles Middle School
- ■ Lawrence Middle School
- ■ South Haven Middle School

"The Road Commission's Paint the Plow Program is a great way to foster appreciation for school art programs and student creativity, as well as to bring attention to the important issue of safe driving during the winter months", Van Buren County Road Commission Managing Director, Bret Witkowski said in the release. "Residents are encouraged to look for these decorated snow plows during parades and community events and during winter maintenance operations for heavy snow events."

The plow that receives the most votes will be deemed the "Van Buren County Favorite" and the winning school team will receive a pizza party paid for by Witkowski.

"All are welcome and encouraged to come and take a look at the students' creativity and talent," the release stated.

The painted plows are on display and under surveillance at the Van Buren County Road Commission's Lawrence Garage, 325 West James St. Lawrence, MI.

Voting will be open from Nov. 14 through 21. Participation is limited to one vote per person.

The community can vote through an online survey posted on the Van Buren County Road Commission's website at www.vbcrc.org/paintaplow.

Latitude Blue SALON & SPA

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE THAT VOTED LATITUDE BLUE SALON FOR BEST HAIR SALON IN SOUTH HAVEN!

203 CENTER ST
SOUTH HAVEN, MI 49090
269.635.1544

Exceptional Heart Care

50 TOP CARDIOVASCULAR HOSPITALS 2025

When it comes to your heart, you want the best. That's why more people choose Bronson for heart care than any other health system in southwest Michigan. Our cardiology team in Van Buren County is dedicated to quality and works closely with you and your primary care provider to develop a personalized plan of care. Whether your heart needs medical management, a procedure or surgery, when you choose one of us, you get the skill, compassion and fierce determination of a top team of experts!

Learn more at bronsonhealth.com/heart.

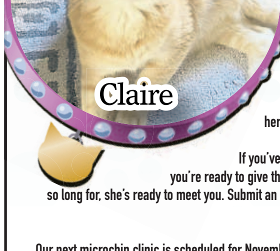
BRONSON

Al-Van Humane Society

Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate

73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Claire!



Claire arrived at Al-Van in rough shape: malnourished, dehydrated, flea-covered, and with one underdeveloped eye that ultimately had to be removed. This one-eyed orange tabby, originally named Catastrophe, came in fragile but determined. She healed, she adapted, and she became Claire the survivor. She spent more than a year waiting for her chance at a forever home. At the shelter, she has often been overlooked because of her shy nature. What she really needed was time, patience, and a place where she could relax enough to show who she truly is.

Claire recently moved into a foster home and everything changed. In a home setting, Claire has blossomed. She now enjoys receiving pets, plays like any other young cat, and has even decided her cat foster sister makes excellent company. The timid girl who once kept her distance from people and other cats has transformed into a confident little pirate princess who finally feels safe.

If you've ever considered fostering, Claire shows exactly why it matters. And if you're ready to give this resilient, one-eyed sweetheart the forever home she's been waiting so long for, she's ready to meet you. Submit an adoption survey at al-van.org/adopt and learn more about fostering at al-van.org/foster.

Microchip Clinic

Our next microchip clinic is scheduled for November 22nd at the Paw Paw District Library from 12-3pm. Give your pet a lifetime of security and peace of mind for you for just $25 per pet. Space is limited, so we encourage you to sign up early to secure your spot. To sign up visit us online at al-van.org/microchipping or call (269)637-5062.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST

Wet dog food, pate cat food and cat treats (both squeezable and dry).

SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Photo provided

South Haven Elks Lodge #1509 members Spencer Campbell and Jim Mishler presented a donation of 30 personal hygiene kits to Jennifer Picketts, voluntary service specialist with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring – 1 pm Tuesdays. Lakeside Social, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring – 1 pm Wednesdays. Lakeside Social, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

South Haven Memorial Library: Autumn Painting Contest from Oct. 20 to Nov. 10. Participants can pick up a mini canvas from the library and paint, sketch or color something for fall or Thanksgiving related, featuring either books or the library. Painting need to be dropped of by Nov. 10. The public can vote on the painting from Nov. 17 to 24.

Michigan Maritime Museum: free admission on the first Sunday of every month from November through April.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

November

23 – Storytellers Senior Readers Theater: The Christmas Gathering at 3 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County. Tickets are $10.

25 – Rotary Club: Kevin Whiteford, will present on the recent tax bill and Brian Kurtz is the program chair.

26 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

28 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Writers read-around, new writers welcome from 1 to 4 p.m.

28 – Holiday in the Park: From 4 to 7 p.m. at Dyckman Park.

December

1 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

2 – Rotary Club: David Flack will present on the new park district and dog park.

3 – South Haven Memorial Library: Music and Movement at 11 a.m.

4 – First United Methodist Church: Free meal. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the meal is served at 6 p.m.

5 – South Haven Memorial Library: Play-doh play date at 11 a.m.

6 – Michigan State University Extension Van Buren County office: Two hour interactive communicating through conflict workshop from 10 a.m. to noon. $20 per person to register.

7 – Paw Paw Community Chorus: 25th Annual Christmas Concert at 4 p.m. at Paw Paw United Methodist Church.

8 – South Haven Garden Club: Club Christmas party at First Congregational Church.

10 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

11 – First United Methodist Church: Free meal. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the meal is served at 6 p.m.

12 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Writers Christmas Story read-around from 1 to 4 p.m. The public invited.

13 – Rotary Club: Rotary and Salvation Army Bell Ringing at Flying Saucer and Walmart.

15 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

18 – First United Methodist Church: Free meal. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the meal is served at 6 p.m.

19 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy Play for preschoolers from 11 a.m. to noon.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Free STEM activities event from 11 a.m. to noon.

21 – South Haven Performance Series: Choral ensemble Vox GR to perform at 4 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

22 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

29 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

31 – New Years Eve Celebration: Downtown South Haven.

Groups sue to block Palisades plant reopening

By CAROL THOMPSON
The Detroit News

Don Campbell / HP file photo

The Holtec International Palisades Power Plant in Covert Township is pictured in 2024.

COVERT — Environmental groups opposed to the reopening of Palisades Nuclear Plant in Covert Township have filed a federal lawsuit seeking to block the plant owner's moves to resume generating nuclear power there.

The groups – Beyond Nuclear, Don't Waste Michigan and Michigan Safe Energy Future – say the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission violated the Atomic Energy Act by granting Palisades owner Holtec exemptions that would allow the company to resume power production at Palisades even though the NRC had previously approved its former owner's request to close and decommission the plant.

"When those certifications were provided in connection with the decommissioning of a reactor, they legally prohibited any further operation of the Palisades reactor or replacement of the fuel into the Palisades reactor vessel," the groups said in their lawsuit.

The groups filed their complaint against the NRC and Holtec Decommissioning International, the company that purchased Palisades in 2022 and transferred ownership to affiliate Holtec International, which aims to restart the plant. They filed the suit Monday in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan and asked the court to block the NRC's approvals of exemptions that will allow Palisades to resume generating power.

"Holtec's hiding behind decommissioning phase regulatory relief and waivers, and NRC compliantly allowing and enabling it, has resulted in serious, negative safety consequences, which could lead to a reactor core meltdown on the Great Lakes shore," Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear said in a press release.

NRC spokeswoman Viktoria Mitlyng said the commission does not comment on ongoing litigation.

"It is important to reiterate that the NRC has been conducting methodical, thorough and independent reviews of licensing actions and conducting real-time inspections of the plant's maintenance, testing and repairs of systems and components required for plant startup," she said in an email. "The plant can only start up when this work is completed and the NRC determines that plant systems, components and programs meet federal requirements."

Holtec spokesman Nick Culp defended the approvals the company has sought and received from the NRC that move it closer to reopening Palisades. He said Palisades could support Michigan's energy grid and provide hundreds of jobs if it resumes operating.

"The NRC's approval to reauthorize power operations at Palisades followed a rigorous, independent review within the agency's existing regulatory framework," Culp said in an email. "As we move toward the plant's historic restart, our top priority is ensuring the plant is prepared to return to long-term safe and reliable generation."

Holtec purchased Palisades from former owner Entergy Nuclear in June of 2022, at first filing plans to decommission the plant that Entergy had shut down ahead of schedule the month before.

Holtec soon declared its interest in resuming operations at Palisades. That plan garnered support from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan lawmakers and the U.S. Department of Energy, which granted Holtec a nearly $57 million loan for the work.

"(Holtec) claimed that regulations like technical specifications, such as on anti-corrosion water chemistry, did not apply because the plant was in decommissioning mode," said Arnold Gunderson, a witness for the environmental groups. "At the same time, they claimed that the plant still had an active legal license, the supposed legal basis for their NRC-approved regulatory pathway to restart. So Holtec is claiming that Palisades was both dead and alive at the same time."

Holtec has previously said it aims to resume producing power at Palisades at the end of this year. If successful, Palisades would be the first American nuclear plant to produce power after it had been put into decommissioning status.

When asked Tuesday about Holtec's goals for restarting the plant, Culp said the company has achieved approvals for "several" licensing steps that put it on the path to reopening.

"Remaining items continue to move through the normal review process and we are hopeful for timely review," he said. "We're very pleased with the progress to date, which affirms that we're moving in the right direction toward safely restarting Palisades."

Holtec "has no right to its desired schedule," the environmental groups said in their complaint. "The public interest is best served by effective regulation of nuclear energy."

The Spotlight

A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

Confused about your health insurance options?
Under 65 health plan available now
Call Dale K. Morgan
"DK"
Your local Medicare expert since 1994
269-637-6619

JENSEN'S EXCAVATING INCORPORATED
Driveways • Water & Sewer • Septic Systems • Demolition
Crushed Concrete • Sand • Gravel • Stone • Topsoil
www.JensensExcavating.com
(269) 637-5642

Driver's License Restoration
It's a Process... We Can Help!
Drunk Driving & Criminal Defense
"Friends... Don't Let Friends Plead Guilty!"
Law Office of Frederick J. Taylor
269-388-6060 1-800-250-FRED

MILLER
D.L. MILLER FUNERAL HOME, INC.
Bangor Chapel
258 W. Monroe Street
Bangor, MI 49013
(269) 427-7551
Ryan K. Oliver, Owner/Manager
Bloomingdale Chapel
203 East Spring
P.O. Box 171
Bloomingdale, MI 49026
(269) 521-3121
Floyd Decker, Manager
Gobles Chapel
208 West Main
P.O. Box 6
Gobles, MI 49055
(269) 628-2852
D. Lee Miller, Manager

If interested in including your business here contact freid@thehp.com

The South Haven Tribune makes every effort to ensure accuracy in its stories. If you believe there is an error, please contact the editor of the page on which it occurred. If you are unsure who to contact, call 269-637-1104 to be directed to the appropriate editor.

FOCUS

Tom Gralish / The Philadelphia Inquirer / TNS

Rev. Adam Hearlson (left) of Overbrook Presbyterian Church and Rabbi Ethan Witkovsky pose at Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El in Wynnewood on Oct. 28.

A Pennsylvania synagogue opened its doors to a local church

A *'deeply profound'* partnership ensued

By **DENALI SAGNER**
The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

PHILADELPHIA — Rabbi Ethan Witkovsky and Reverend Adam Hearlson seem like they've been friends forever.

Witkovsky, 41, is the senior rabbi at Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El (TBH-BE), a Conservative movement synagogue in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. Hearlson, 44, is the pastor at Overbrook Presbyterian Church (OPC), in Philadelphia.

Sitting in the basement of an Abington senior center after a meeting of Montgomery County faith leaders in mid-October, the two finished each other's sentences as they told the story of the collaboration between their two congregations, one that began after a fire destroyed OPC's sanctuary in 2024.

While the collaboration began as a logistical favor, Witkovsky and Hearlson say it has grown into something "deeply profound." Through Bible and Torah studies, holidays, lunches, and Easter egg hunts, the partnership has now stretched across time and tradition, bringing the communities into a lasting cycle of allyship and understanding.

After a fire destroyed Overbrook Presbyterian Church's sanctuary, Rabbi Ethan Witkovsky of Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El in Wynnewood stepped up to support his friend, forming a cycle of camaraderie.

The beginning of a partnership

Witkovsky and Hearlson met at a 2023 barbecue during Sukkot, a week-long Jewish harvest holiday. Hearlson joked that someone said, "You guys need to meet because you're tall, or whatever." (Hearlson is 6'7 and Witkovsky is 6'5).

The two got to talking – about religion, philosopher Aldo Leopold, and a Wisconsin naturalist they both like. A friendship was born.

On Jan. 15, 2024, a fire erupted in OPC's historic sanctuary, displacing the nearly 350 people who called the church their spiritual home. Repair costs were estimated to be close to $10 million.

TBH-BE quickly jumped in to help. Shortly after the fire, OPC began to gather at the synagogue for Bible study and board meetings. Other religious organizations also stepped up to the plate, as well, including Penn Wynne Presbyterian Church, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ardmore, and the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Overbrook.

As TBH-BE and OPC began to regularly cohabitate, Witkovsky and Hearlson's friendship deepened. Witkovsky had arrived at TBH-BE from a large New York synagogue with multiple staff members. At the time OPC moved in, he was TBH-BE's only rabbi. Sharing space with Hearlson and having another clergy person "wander into my office" to discuss everything from scripture to emails "was amazing," he said.

'These guys are here for us'

In March 2024, a sign outside TBH-BE reading "Our Community Stands With Israel" was vandalized twice with a swastika. At a prayer service shortly after, members of both congregations stood together. Witkovsky and Hearlson both spoke.

"That was a huge thing for my community of, like, 'These guys are here for us,'" Witkovsky said.

What followed is what Hearlson and Witkovsky described as a self-sustaining cycle of camaraderie, one borne out of the fire at OPC and forged by the vandalism at TBH-BE.

"The hope," Hearlson said, "is that you don't remember who started the mutual circle of care, that it continues to feed back on itself over and over again, and you live in that circle, recognizing its goodness."

(During the interview, Witkovsky told Hearlson that all of the money OPC donated to TBH-BE would be put back into OPC's building fund – the circular care in action.)

In the months that followed the vandalism, the two communities shared scripture, bagels, and multipurpose rooms.

Elizabeth Cosgriff, a member of OPC, attended a study session in which Witkovsky and Hearlson each taught a piece of scripture from the other's tradition. She described a "depth of scholarship" from Witkovsky, who spoke about Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. That night, Hearlson taught a passage from the Talmud, the central text of Jewish religious law.

"It helped broaden my understanding of Judaism and appreciate the connections," Cosgriff said.

A Kosher-for-Passover Easter egg hunt

A test for the budding interfaith partnership came around Easter. OPC needed a place to hold services, and Witkovsky suggested the synagogue. For both the pastor and the rabbi, it was "a novel idea."

"The cultural religious power has been in the hands of Christians for so long," Hearlson said, explaining the unease many of his congregants felt about putting up a cross and hosting Easter in a Jewish space. "That was not lost on us."

But for TBH-BE, it was a no-brainer. Anna Caplan, who serves on the synagogue's board of directors, said there was "immediate enthusiasm."

Easter landed on the eighth night of Passover, meaning the church and synagogue would be holding services at the same time. That night, around 200 Jews and 300 Christians gathered under the same roof to pray separately, but together, about rebirth and renewal.

Hearlson and Witkovsky trade off recalling one detail with laughter.

Because Easter and Passover overlapped, Witkovsky quickly realized OPC would not be able to bring sacramental bread into the synagogue. Instead, its congregants would have to take communion with matzah, the unleavened bread eaten on Passover.

Hearlson described leading from the pulpit as the congregation went to take communion. Suddenly, there was "an audible crunch."

"And I'm like, 'I don't think I've ever heard that in a Christian service before,'" Hearlson said.

At the end of the service, Hearlson invited congregants to sing Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus. Both Christians and Jews joined him.

"I felt a real sense of belonging even though I hadn't met most of the people there," said Caplan, one of the TBH-BE congregants who volunteered to sing.

Afterward, the two communities shared a meal and an Easter egg hunt on the synagogue lawn. Inside the Easter eggs was Kosher-for-Passover candy, selected so Jewish children could participate, too. One TBH-BE congregant kept the plastic Easter egg to put on his Passover Seder plate the next year.

Hearlson said the memory of Easter at TBH-BE makes him emotional.

"I can't tell you how theologically capacious and generous that idea is," he said.

Interfaith work on the Main Line, Hearlson added, has long followed a "live and let live" belief.

"This was something more," he said. "We're going to actively support each other. We're going to be in each other's lives."

'Living your values' in a divided world

Though OPC's sanctuary remains under construction, its offices have since been rebuilt. The church can now hold Bible study and meetings in its own space, a relief after nearly two years of displacement.

Yet Hearlson said he and his congregants "feel a loss."

When asked what it means to practice interfaith collaboration in a moment of rising antisemitism, Witkovsky was pensive. Some of it is deeply profound, he said, like exchanging texts from each other's traditions. Other things are simpler, like sharing the leftovers from a catered lunch.

"In this world of difference ..." he said. "Just having people whose faces you know, it's super important. It's just an easy way to live your values."

When OPC's building is complete, Witkovsky joked to Hearlson that he's "having staff meetings there" after all of the Bible studies hosted in the synagogue.

Hearlson quipped back with a smile, "We'll order Hymie's."

This suburban content is produced with support from the Leslie Miller and Richard Worley Foundation and The Lenfest Institute for Journalism. Editorial content is created independently of the project donors. Gifts to support The Inquirer's high-impact journalism can be made at inquirer.com/donate. A list of Lenfest Institute donors can be found at lenfestinstitute.org/supporters.

FOCUS

Tyger Williams / The Philadelphia Inquirer / TNS

Beatriz Gonzalez Falcon, law student volunteer and translator, and Ishita Jadon, first-year law student at Penn Carey Law, are helping Pedro Atonio Rodriguez, of the Dominican Republic, at the Citizenship Clinic.

For these immigrants seeking citizenship, the test is harder and support harder to find

By MICHELLE MYERS
The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

PHILADELPHIA — Raised in Northeast Philadelphia, sisters Perla and Aydee Trinidad do everything together, from speaking with a similar cadence to enrolling in the same college program. But these days, only one of them feels like she can move through the city without the worry of being taken away.

Even as a legal resident, "with all this immigration stuff going on, I don't feel safe. It's like you need to be a citizen to feel like you belong here," said Perla Trinidad, 24.

Aydee Trinidad, 22, became a citizen in March. Having applied before the 2024 election, her biggest motivation for citizenship was accessing scholarships that could help her obtain a business degree.

Now, beyond opportunity, the Dominican American feels like her status grants her safety. So, when Perla Trinidad expressed a desire to follow in her footsteps and apply for citizenship, her sister took her to the place that had helped her, Esperanza Immigration Legal Services to file her application, which is now being processed.

Esperanza runs free monthly citizenship clinics year-round, screening permanent residents to see if they qualify to apply for U.S. citizenship and offering a free summer civics class to prepare them for the test. This year, however, things have changed – the test is longer and requires more knowledge, and some organizations that have traditionally helped migrants prepare for the test have lost the federal funding to do so.

"Naturalization has never been a polarizing issue," said executive director Anu Thomas. "Immigration, sure, but not naturalization, and yet we see the administration doing it."

The 2025 naturalization civics test

Becoming a U.S. citizen comes with a plethora of requirements, including passing English and civics tests.

The civics test has been a requirement since the early 1900s, and the 2008 version had been in use for almost 20 years.

The oral evaluation pulls from a list of 100 U.S. history and government questions. A U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officer would ask the applicant 10 questions, and so long as they answered six right, they passed.

Between October 2023 and September 2024, 89.7 percent of immigrants who took the test nationwide passed on the first try, and 94.4 percent of those who needed to retake it passed on the second (and last) opportunity, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. This led to 818,500 people becoming U.S. citizens, including more than 21,000 in Philadelphia.

But despite the local number being high enough to fill Xfinity Mobile Arena, the national figure saw a 7 percent decrease from the previous fiscal year, according to federal data.

That was before the latest changes.

As of Oct. 20, the civics test requires answering at least 12 out of 20 questions – from a bank of 128 questions – correctly.

Relying on the community to form America's new citizens

In April, the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program, which helped prepare legal permanent residents for naturalization, was canceled. That left community organizations, public libraries, faith-based groups, and educational organizations without the means to continue helping immigrants study for the citizenship test.

Esperanza, one of just a handful of organizations in the Philadelphia area that offers free legal assistance and test preparation to lower-income immigrants, had to shorten its annual summer citizenship class from 10 weeks to five, after losing the $30,000 federal subgrant that financed the program.

They pulled through, Thomas said, due to a generous donor and volunteers, partnering with five college law students and four high schoolers to create a shorter curriculum that would still provide their 15 students with the information they needed.

"Everything that happens, you just absorb; it's not like we have more hands at the table," Thomas said. "Mobilizing volunteers has helped us fortify during this time of utterly devastating changes that are happening in immigration."

Despite the changes, Esperanza continues providing free services in English, Spanish, and French to folks preparing to become citizens.

That kind of accessibility was life-changing for Mexico native Zuly Peralta.

The nurse traveled from Vineland, N.J., to North Philly, hoping to apply for citizenship with help from Esperanza. After 24 years living in the United States, learning of the clinic was the first time the 41-year-old heard that she could qualify for citizenship.

Rachel Wisniewski / The Philadelphia Inquirer / TNS

The Museum of the American Revolution holds classes to prepare Philadelphia-area immigrants to become engaged U.S. citizens.

"As a Spanish speaker, I never really had a place that could provide information" about becoming a citizen, Peralta said. "Not being from here, this is an opportunity to finally feel like everyone else and give my five children a better future."

When folks reach out for services, Thomas sends them a survey that checks citizenship eligibility. If they meet the requirements, she invites them to the monthly citizenship clinic, where their documents are reviewed and their application processed to be sent to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

In Old City, the Museum of the American Revolution has also continued preparing future U.S. citizens from all walks of life with the help of donors, as it has done since 2019.

The museum's free classes have been virtual since the pandemic. That helps fill the need for citizenship classes not only in Pennsylvania, but also in other states.

"People have to understand that what we are asking potential citizens to know is basically the totality of everything all of us who were raised in American school systems learn across every year of U.S. history and the ability to not only understand but know what those complex things mean," said Adrienne G. Whaley, the museum's director of education and community engagement.

That can be overwhelming without help, added the program facilitator Dana Devon. Another added pressure: failing the test a second time will mean restarting the application process from the beginning.

The museum holds multiple cohorts a year, keeping classes at about 15 people and teaching them for eight weeks using images from the museum and virtual tours.

Before President Donald Trump's second term, their teachings included guest immigration lawyers and a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officer visiting to help students prepare for their big test day. Those visits are no longer happening.

"USCIS is no longer available at the moment, and the attorneys are extremely underwater helping people with asylum and deportation issues; they just don't have time," Devon said.

Since January, U.S. immigration policies have become more restrictive, leading to 1.6 million undocumented immigrants self-deporting, according to the Department of Homeland Security, as the Trump administration has stepped up immigration enforcement.

An additional 500,000 people have lost their temporary protected status that allowed them to stay in the country. And, most recently, the administration has limited the number of refugees to 7,500 for 2026, giving priority to white South Africans.

A U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services spokesperson said future engagement information would be shared once available and directed immigrants in the naturalization process to the Citizenship Resource Center.

As a facilitator, Devon views preparing her students for the new citizenship test as one of her most important jobs, not only so they can pass but also so they can be informed citizens.

"We make stakeholders, people that when they go to the voting booth, they do so as informed, engaged, and knowledgeable citizens," Devon said.

The current immigration climate and the desire to be the kind of voter who can contribute to a better future for all is what brought North Philly resident Yanibel Cleto, 28, to ask Esperanza for help with her citizenship application.

"I have seen things that are sad, the raids, the not giving people who come here a chance to work, that makes me want to vote so I can choose who gets to be president," Cleto said.

Cleto longs to become an immigration lawyer herself and learn as much U.S. history as possible to ensure that her 3-month-old son is the kind of U.S.-born citizen who knows his history enough to become "a good man who cares about others," she said.

‘Simulation theory’ brings an AI twist out of *‘The Matrix’* to ideas mystics and religious scholars have voiced for centuries

By RIZWAN VIRK
Faculty Associate, PhD Candidate in Human and Social Dimensions of Science and Technology, Arizona State University

In the most talked-about film from the final year of the 20th century, “The Matrix,” a computer hacker named Neo finds that the world he lives and works in isn’t real. It’s a virtual reality, created by artificial intelligence.

At the time, the idea seemed like science fiction. In the years since, however, that concept has become an increasingly credible theory: “the simulation hypothesis.” This theory posits that, like Neo, living things are characters inside a computer-generated simulation – or, as I describe in my 2025 book, a massively multiplayer video game. In this hypothesis, the physical world around us is actually part of a virtual reality.

Simulation theory raises the kind of questions once reserved for mystics and religious scholars: Why are we here? Is there more to reality than we can see? Is there a creator? Are we more than our physical bodies?

The science and technology may be modern, but in some ways, this hypothesis echoes ideas that faith traditions have explored for centuries.

Living in a game?

Simulation theory became popular from the work of philosopher Nick Bostrom, particularly a paper he published in 2003. The basic argument goes like this: If technology continues to improve, humans will be able to build virtual worlds indistinguishable from physical reality, and AI characters indistinguishable from biological beings. This suggests it’s possible that a more advanced civilization has already reached that point – and that we are inside one of their simulations.

Physicists, mathematicians, technologists and computer scientists have jumped into the game. Opinions span a wide range of probabilities. Columbia University astronomer David Kipping tried to evaluate the odds we live in a simulation and came up with about 50/50. Some thinkers doubt that the question is even answerable, while others think the theory is impossible – like a 2025 paper arguing that no purely algorithmic system can explain the universe.

The simulation hypothesis does not have to mean that people in the simulation are only soulless, computed AI inside someone else’s creation. In “The Matrix,” for example, even though Neo and other humans are characters inside the simulation, they also existed outside of the virtual world.

Higher intelligence

Simulation theory implies there is a greater intelligence than our own that exists beyond the physical world and may have created our universe – echoing foundational beliefs in many religious traditions. Transhumanist philosopher David Pearce, in fact, called Bostrom’s argument “the first interesting argument for the existence of a Creator in 2000 years.”

The Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for example, all worship a single creator. The biblical Book of Genesis describes God creating the world in six days, and there is a similar narrativein the Quran. According to these scriptures, God simply spoke, and it happened.

Similarly, the simulation hypothesis argues that the world was created through commands – that is, through code. Today, users of AI issue verbal prompts to automatically create realistic pictures and videos that are nearly indistinguishable from real people and landscapes.

In fact, users can even prompt AI programs to create characters that insist they aren’t virtual, as some have done in recent months – a phenomenon called “prompt theory.”

In August 2025, Google released Genie 3, which lets users create realistic-looking worlds that they can navigate through, like in a video game. In the past, these virtual worlds needed to be created by hand by teams of designers, limiting how big or complex they could be. Today, as AI advances, the idea that vast virtual worlds could be created to seem as large as our own is no longer considered such a fantasy.

Body and soul

A second way modern simulation theory echoes traditional religions is in the idea of the relationship between the soul and the body.

One version of the hypothesis – what I call the RPG, or “role-playing game,” version – suggests the simulation is like a multiplayer video game. Each character inside the game represents the external player who controls them, meaning that, in some sense, the characters exhibit free will.

The term for such a character, an “avatar,” is rooted in Sanskrit, the language of many Hindu, Buddhist and Jain texts. In Hinduism, an “avatar” refers to the incarnation of a divine being in the form of a human body.

The idea of incarnation, or a soul entering a body, is one of the most mysterious aspects of many religious traditions. Describing the development of an unborn child, the Hadith – the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad – describe a moment when “the soul is breathed into him.” The Bible, too, uses the metaphor of breath to describe incarnation: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

Another common metaphor is that the soul dons the body, just as the body puts on clothing. Rumi, whose poetry often explores mystic Sufi themes, compared the body to a garment that could be taken off or changed.

A similar metaphor was used in the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu scripture: “Just as you throw out used clothes and put on other clothes, new ones, the Self discards its used bodies and puts on others that are new.”

If we think about the soul as the player of a virtual reality game, and the body as merely their character inside who has forgotten about the outside world, then the parallels between religion and simulation theory are clear. The game may end, or the character may die, but the player continues to exist outside the game. Some religions teach that each soul can be reincarnated, having many lives – as though the player goes in and plays the game again and again, playing many different characters.

Immersed in a dream

There is also an even more fundamental way simulation theory echoes some religious teachings: the idea that the physical world is not real, or is not all there is to reality.

This is clear in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, which describe the world being a result of “maya,” or an illusion. Often, this is expressed through the metaphor of the world being like a dream that one can awaken from. Indeed, a popular definition of the term “Buddha” is someone who has “awakened.”

The “Samadhiraja Sutra,” or “King of Samadhi Sutra,” for example, teaches:

Know all things to be like this: A mirage, a cloud castle, A dream, an apparition, Without essence, but with qualities that can be seen.

Paramahansa Yogananda, a Hindu monk who died in 1952, wrote “Autobiography of a Yogi,” which introduced meditation and yoga to many in the West. Trying to explain the idea of “maya,” which is often translated as “illusion,” he compared people’s sense of physical reality to actors playing in a motion picture – relatively new technology in the 1920s, when he came from India to make his home in the United States.

As I wrote in my 2023 book about Yogananda, were the famous swami alive today, perhaps he would update the metaphor to use today’s technology: video games.

In a critical scene in “The Matrix,” Neo’s mentor, Morpheus – named after the Greek god of dreams – tells him that he has been living in a dream world. The simulation hypothesis, too, proposes that people may be living in a dream world, albeit one that is virtual, created and maintained by AI.

Perhaps the only reaction is to echo Neo and say: Whoa.

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. The Conversation is wholly responsible for the content.

Vertigo3d / Getty Images

HEALTH

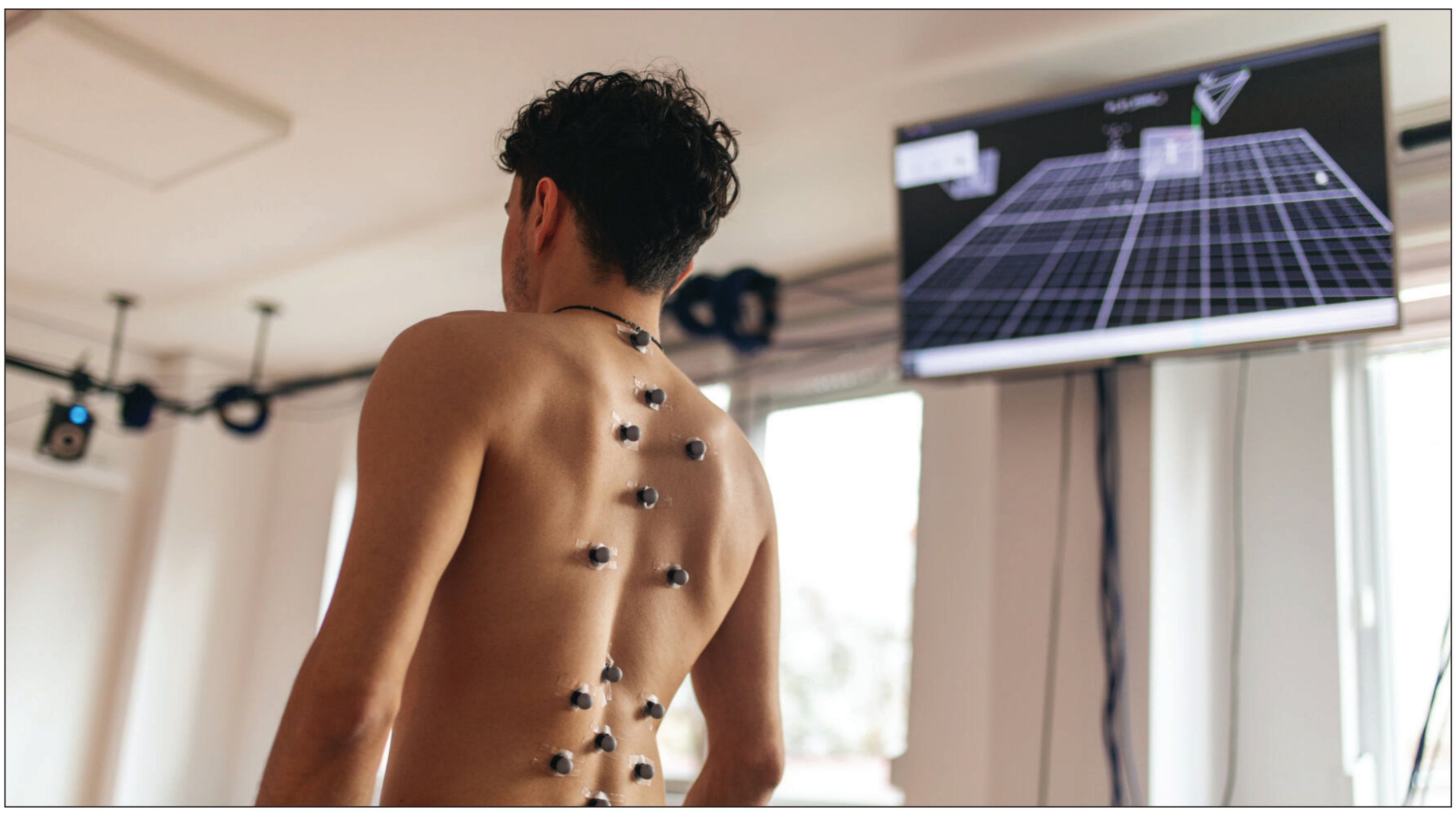
gorodenkoff / Getty Images

An actor wears a motion capture suit and headgear as a film crew captures his movements. The footage is used by a computer to model movement.

Turning motion into medicine

How AI, motion capture and wearables can improve your health

By AZARANG ASADI,
COLLIN D. BOWERSOCK
and MATTHEW BIRD
Oklahoma State University
(The Conversation)



miljko / Getty Images

A young man with scoliosis has sensors attached to his back for a screening and walking test in a doctor's office. On the screen in the background is motion animation of his walk.

People often take walking for granted. We just move, one step after another, without ever thinking about what it takes to make that happen. Yet every single step is an extraordinary act of coordination, driven by precise timing between spinal cord, brain, nerves, muscles and joints.

Historically, people have used stopwatches, cameras or trained eyes to assess walking and its deficits. However, recent technological advances such as motion capture, wearable sensors and data science methods can record and quantify characteristics of step-by-step movement.

We are researchers who study biomechanics and human performance. We and other researchers are increasingly applying this data to improve human movement. These insights not only help athletes of all stripes push their performance boundaries, but they also support movement recovery for patients through personalized feedback. Ultimately, motion could become another vital sign.

From motion data to performance insights

Researchers around the world combine physiology, biomechanics and data science to decode human movement. This interdisciplinary approach sets the stage for a new era where machine learning algorithms find patterns in human movement data collected by continuous monitoring, yielding insights that improve health.

It's the same technology that powers your fitness tracker. For example, the inertial measurement unit in the Apple Watch records motion and derives metrics such as step count, stride length and cadence. Wearable sensors, such as inertial measurement units, record thousands of data points every second. The raw data reveals very little about a person's movement. In fact, the data is so noisy and unstructured that it's impossible to extract any meaningful insight.

That is where signal processing comes into play. A signal is simply a sequence of measurements tracked over time. Imagine putting an inertial measurement unit on your ankle. The device constantly tracks the ankle's movement by measuring signals such as acceleration and rotation. These signals provide an overview of the motion and indicate how the body behaves. However, they often contain unwanted background noise that can blur the real picture.

With mathematical tools, researchers can filter out the noise and isolate the information that truly reflects how the body is performing. It's like taking a blurry photo and using editing tools to make the picture clear.

THE CONVERSATION

The process of cleaning and manipulating the signals is known as signal processing.

After processing the signals, researchers use machine learning techniques to transform them into interpretable metrics. Machine learning is a subfield of artificial intelligence that works by finding patterns and relationships in data. In the context of human movement, these tools can identify features of motion that correspond to key performance and health metrics.

For example, our team at the Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute at Oklahoma State University estimated fitness capacity without requiring exhaustive physical tests or special equipment. Fitness capacity is how efficiently the body can perform physical activity. By combining biomechanics, signal processing and machine learning, we were able to estimate fitness capacity using data from just a few steps of our subjects' walking.

Beyond fitness, walking data offers even deeper insights. Walking speed is a powerful indicator of longevity, and by tracking it, we could learn about people's long-term health and life expectancy.

From performance to medicine

The impact of these algorithms extends far beyond tracking performance such as steps and miles walked. They can be applied to support rehabilitation and prevent injuries. Our team is developing a machine learning algorithm to detect when an athlete is at an elevated risk of injury just by analyzing their body movement and detecting subtle changes.

Other scientists have used similar approaches to monitor motor control impairments following a stroke by continuously assessing how a patient's walking patterns evolve, determining whether motor control is improving, or if the patient is compensating in any way that could lead to future injury.

Similar tools can also be used to inform treatment plans based on each patient's specific needs, moving us closer to true personalized medicine. In Parkinson's disease, these methods have been used to diagnose the condition, monitor its severity and detect episodes of walking difficulties to prompt cues to the patients to resume walking.

Others have used these techniques to design and control wearable assistive devices such as exoskeletons that improve mobility for people with physical disabilities by generating power at precisely timed intervals. In addition, researchers have evaluated movement strategies in military service members and found that those with poor biomechanics had a higher risk of injury. Others have used wrist-worn wearables to detect overuse injuries in service members. At their core, these innovations all have one goal: to restore and improve human movement.

Motion as a vital sign

We believe that the future of personalized medicine lies in dynamic monitoring. Every step, jump or squat carries information about how the body functions, performs and recovers. With advances in wearable technology, AI and cloud computing, real-time movement monitoring and biofeedback are likely to become a routine part of everyday life.

Imagine an athlete's shoe that warns them before an injury occurs, clothing for the elderly that detects and prevents a fall before it occurs, or a smartwatch that detects early signs of stroke based on walking patterns. Combining biomechanics, signal processing and data science turns motion into a vital sign, a real-time reflection of your health and well-being.

Azarang Asad, Collin D. Bowersock and Matthew Bird are scientists at Oklahoma State University.

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

Type 1 diabetes causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment

By BRITTANY BRUGGEMAN, MD, FAAP and CHINEZE EBO, MD, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Each November, we observe National Diabetes Month and engage in discussions surrounding prevention, management and the impact of this increasingly common autoimmune disease.

Diabetes, both type 1 and type 2, are conditions that affect the way the body uses food for energy. Type 1 diabetes, sometimes called juvenile diabetes, is one of the most common chronic diseases affecting children and teens and has no known cure.

Type 1 diabetes happens when the body cannot make enough of the hormone insulin, which helps break down nutrients in food into a form of sugar called glucose. Insulin allows glucose to move from the bloodstream into cells throughout the body to be used for energy.

Ordinarily, our bodies produce insulin in special cells called beta cells found in the pancreas. However, with type 1 diabetes, the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys these beta cells as if they were harmful germs.

Without insulin, glucose is "stuck" in the bloodstream. This leads to high blood glucose levels (hyperglycemia), which can cause damage to the body. Since cells can't use glucose without insulin, the body breaks down stored body fat for fuel. This process creates ketones, which serve as an alternate energy source. However, ketones are acidic and harm the body when their levels are too high.

Symptoms of type 1 diabetes largely result from the lack of energy caused by the body not being able to use glucose. High ketone levels in the bloodstream can also cause symptoms as can high sugar levels in the bloodstream that spill into the urine and pull water along with it, causing dehydration.

Type 1 diabetes symptoms in children can include increased thirst, urination and hunger that can sometimes be extreme and is usually associated with weight loss regardless of eating habits. Other symptoms include headache, irritability and blurry vision if blood sugars are extremely high.

If untreated, type 1 diabetes can lead to symptoms that require immediate medical care. Diabetic emergency symptoms include nausea, vomiting, belly pain, rapid breathing, a fruity or nail polish remover-like odor to the breath and drowsiness or loss of consciousness.

Sometimes, untreated type 1 diabetes can look like the flu. It can seem like the child is OK because they are still urinating normally, or even more than usual. If your child has flu-like symptoms along with increased thirst and frequent urination, get them checked by a doctor right away.

Diabetes is diagnosed when a child has classic symptoms along with abnormally high blood sugar levels. Diabetes can also be diagnosed by a test that shows what the average blood sugar has been over the past 3 months. This test is called hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c).

Less commonly, diabetes is diagnosed with an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT). With this test, blood sugars are measured before and after a sugary drink is given. Doctors can also test urine for ketones.

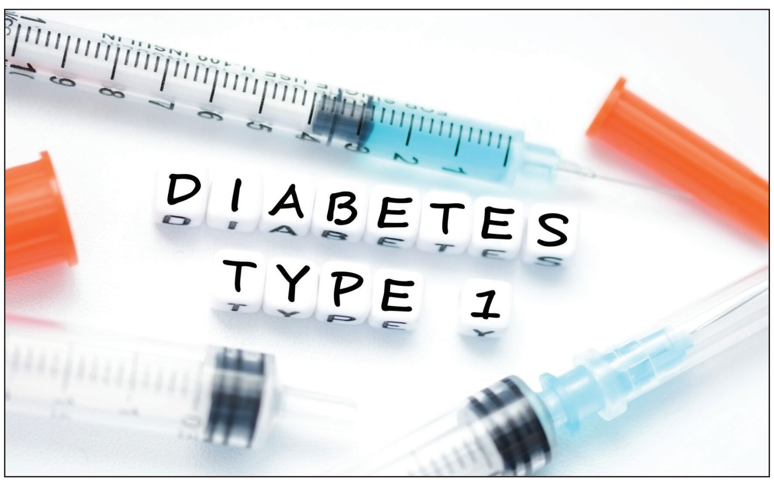
The best clues to whether a child has type 1 or type 2 diabetes is a combination of factors doctors consider. This includes the child's age and other factors like the presence of proteins called islet autoantibodies in the bloodstream. This is a sign that there is an immune attack happening against the beta cells, indicating type 1 diabetes.

Treatment for type 1 diabetes is aimed at normalizing blood sugar levels but this is not a simple task. Blood sugars need to be monitored frequently with a blood glucose meter – a portable device that tests a drop of blood placed on a test strip inserted into the meter – or a continuous glucose monitor (CGM). A CGM uses a small sensor to continuously measure the glucose level in the space under the skin with results being sent to an insulin pump, phone app or handheld device.

Diabetes can be treated by giving insulin through multiple daily injections. This can be done with either pens or syringes with very thin and short needles. Insulin injections are most commonly given in the upper part of the arms, in the front of the thighs and in the fatty skin of the belly. The insulin is absorbed into fatty tissue and typically isn't very painful.

Insulin can also be given through a small wearable device often referred to as an insulin "pump." The pump delivers insulin through a tiny tube under the skin called a cannula. That tube can be made from plastic or even metal depending on how the wearer tolerates them. There are also multiple different kinds of insulin pumps to best fit the wearer's lifestyle.

A healthy diet is also very important in type 1 diabetes. Insulin dosing needs to be matched with the amount of carbohydrates ingested. Being physically active is also key, and insulin often needs to be reduced at times of physical activity. Several insulin pumps have settings that can drop insulin levels during exercise and sleep to minimize the chance of having a low blood sugar episode or hypoglycemia.



Dreamstime / TNS

Type 1 diabetes happens when the body cannot make enough of the hormone insulin, which helps break down nutrients in food into a form of sugar called glucose.

An automated insulin delivery system (AID, also called an "artificial pancreas") is another option. With an AID, an insulin pump and a CGM communicate with each other to help regulate the blood sugars. AID systems can drop background insulin levels if the wearer is riding low or boost insulin output if sugars are climbing.

If you notice any of the symptoms of type 1 diabetes in your child, bring them to their pediatrician right away. The doctor can easily check for excess sugar in the urine or blood. It may be tempting to borrow a glucose meter from a relative or friend to check your child's blood sugar, but we advise against this. It is always best to get an opinion from a doctor so they can swiftly begin treatment if needed.

Advances in screening have made it possible to assess the risk of developing type 1 diabetes before symptoms appear. People at higher risk, including those with a relative with type 1 diabetes, may be eligible for screening through a research study. And other options may be available for those without a type 1 diabetes relative.

While type 1 diabetes cannot yet be fully prevented, newer medications can help delay its onset in certain high-risk individuals. For those at high risk who show early signs of blood sugar abnormalities, an FDA-approved medication is available that can delay the progression to full-blown type 1 diabetes by an average of 2 years. It works by targeting the specific immune cells responsible for attacking insulin-producing cells in the pancreas, helping to slow progression of the disease.

Chineze Ebo, MD, FAAP, is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Endocrinology and a Pediatric Endocrinology fellow at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Brittany S. Bruggeman, MD, FAAP is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Endocrinology and a pediatric endocrinologist and type 1 diabetes physician scientist at the University of Florida.

Is COVID during pregnancy linked to autism? What a new study shows, and what it doesn't

By CÉLINE GOUNDER
KFF Health News (TNS)

A large study from Massachusetts has found that babies whose mothers had COVID-19 while pregnant were slightly more likely to have a range of neurodevelopmental diagnoses by age 3. Most of these children had speech or motor delays, and the link was strongest in boys and when the mother was infected late in pregnancy.

The increase in risk was small for any one child, but because millions of women were pregnant during the pandemic, even a small increase matters. The study doesn't prove that COVID infection during pregnancy causes autism or other brain conditions in the fetus, but it suggests that infections and inflammation during pregnancy can affect how a baby's brain grows, something scientists have seen before with other illnesses. It's a reason to help pregnant women avoid COVID and to keep a close eye on children who were exposed in the womb.

Dreamstime / TNS

What the study found

Researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital examined medical records from more than 18,000 mothers and their children born from March 2020 through May 2021, before vaccines were widely available to pregnant women. Because everyone giving birth during that period was tested for COVID, the team could clearly see which pregnancies were exposed to the virus causing it.

About 5 percent of those mothers had COVID while pregnant. Their children were modestly more likely to be diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental condition by age 3 than those whose mothers weren't infected, even after accounting for differences in maternal age, race, insurance status, and preterm birth.

The link appeared strongest among boys and when infection occurred in their mother's third trimester. Still, most children in both groups showed typical development.

"This was a very clean group to follow," said Andrea Edlow, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist at Mass General and one of the study's authors. "Because of universal testing early in the pandemic, we knew who had COVID and who didn't."

Independent authorities say COVID, which causes a powerful immune response in some people, fits the biological pattern seen with other infections in pregnancy. Alan Brown, a professor of psychiatry and epidemiology at Columbia University who studies maternal infection and brain development and was not involved in this research, explained, "COVID would be a very strong candidate for it to happen because the amount of inflammation is very extreme."

How might infection affect brain development?

Scientists are still piecing together how various infections during pregnancy can affect fetal development. Severe illness can cause inflammation that disrupts brain growth or can trigger preterm birth, which carries its own risks.

"There's a long history of evidence showing that maternal infection can slightly raise the risk for many neurodevelopmental disorders," said Roy Perlis, the vice chair for research in psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and co-author of the new study.

Edlow's lab is investigating how infection and inflammation may interfere with brain development. In a healthy brain, immune cells help shape developing neural circuits by trimming away extra or unnecessary connections, a process known as "synaptic pruning," which sculpts the brain's wiring. When a mother's immune system is activated by infection, inflammatory molecules can reach the fetal brain and alter the pruning process.

Animal studies support Edlow's hypothesis. When scientists trigger inflammation in pregnant mice, their offspring often show changes in how brain cells grow and connect, changes that can alter learning and behavior.

Why late pregnancy and why boys?

In Edlow and Perlis' study, the link between COVID and developmental delays was strongest when infection occurred late in pregnancy, during the third trimester. That's also when the fetal brain is growing most rapidly, forming and refining millions of neural connections.

"When we think of organ development, we think earlier in pregnancy, but the brain is an exception in this regard, where there's a massive amount of brain development in the third trimester. And that continues after birth," Perlis said. "It is entirely plausible that the third trimester is a period of vulnerability specifically for brain development."

But not all researchers agree that the third trimester is uniquely vulnerable. Brian Lee, a professor of epidemiology at Drexel University, cautioned that because most mothers in the study were tested at delivery, there were simply more late-pregnancy infections to analyze. "That gives the study more power to find a difference in the third trimester," he said. "It doesn't prove earlier infections aren't important."

The study also found stronger effects in boys. That pattern is familiar: Boys are generally more likely than girls to have speech or motor delays and to be diagnosed with autism. Researchers suspect that male fetuses may be more susceptible to stress and inflammation, though the biology isn't fully understood.

What the study can and can't show

Edlow and Perlis are careful to say the study shows an association, not proof that COVID infection in pregnancy causes developmental problems. Many other factors could explain the correlation.

Mothers who get sick with COVID may have other health issues, such as obesity, diabetes, or mental health conditions, that increase the risk of developmental delays in children. "Persons with mental disorders are much more likely to get COVID. Women with mental disorders are much more likely to have kids with neurodevelopmental problems," Lee said. "Mothers with worse physical health are also at higher risk of having children with neurodevelopmental problems."

Lee's research has shown that even infections before or after pregnancy can be linked to autism, suggesting that shared genetics or environment, rather than the infection itself, could be at play. That's why experts say much larger, longer studies are needed to understand the extent of any risk from the infection.

Edlow, Perlis, and their team plan to follow the children in their study as they grow older to see whether early differences persist or fade. They're also studying how inflammation during pregnancy affects the placenta and fetal brain, and how to counteract these effects.

What about vaccination?

Because this study followed pregnancies from early in the pandemic, it doesn't answer whether vaccination changes the risk. But other research offers reassurance.

A large national study in Scotland found no difference in early developmental outcomes between children whose mothers were vaccinated and those who weren't. Another study in the U.S. found the same: no link between prenatal COVID vaccination and developmental delays through 18 months. Both align with decades of data showing that vaccination during pregnancy is safe for both the mother and the baby.

"Vaccination is a short spike … your immune system revs up, then it goes back to normal," Edlow said. "COVID [infection] is much more prolonged, unpredictable, and people can get … a dysregulated immune phenomenon that really doesn't exist in vaccine responses."

What this means for parents and clinicians

Since late 2020, there's been widespread confusion and misinformation about the safety of COVID vaccination during pregnancy. Some women have hesitated to get vaccinated out of fear it might harm their baby. But the evidence since then has been clear: COVID vaccines are safe in pregnancy. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists strongly recommends COVID vaccination to protect both mother and child.

Experts say the broader lesson is that pregnancy is a period of vulnerability, and prevention matters, not only for COVID, but other infections as well.

Janet Currie, a professor of economics at Yale University, said these risks remain "underappreciated," despite decades of evidence. "Even though the flu vaccine is recommended for pregnant women, very few pregnant women get it," she said. "Physicians seem to be reluctant to vaccinate pregnant women."

As Gil Mor, scientific director of the C.S. Mott Center for Human Growth and Development at Wayne State University in Detroit, put it, "Protecting the mother is protecting the long-term health of the offspring. … The best intervention is vaccination."

A century-old echo

The idea that what happens in the womb can shape life after birth took root with studies of famine, like the Dutch "Hunger Winter" in the final months of World War II. In 1944 and 1945, as German forces blockaded the western Netherlands, rations fell to just a few hundred calories a day. Thousands died of starvation, and women pregnant during that period gave birth to babies who later faced higher risks of heart disease, diabetes, and schizophrenia. The episode became a cornerstone of the " fetal origins " idea, that deprivation or stress in pregnancy can have lifelong effects.

The 1918 flu pandemic broadened that idea to infection. Babies exposed to influenza in utero later showed small but lasting differences in education and earnings, a sign that illness during pregnancy could affect brain development. Researchers in Taiwan, Sweden, Switzerland, Brazil, and Japan found similar consequences. Some argued that those findings reflected the disruptions of World War I, not the flu itself. But later studies, including those from the United Kingdom and Finland, have strengthened the case for a biological effect, reinforcing that the infection itself, not wartime upheaval, was the key driver.

"It isn't simply influenza that can alter fetal neurodevelopment," Kristina Adams Waldorf, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Washington, explained. "Many types of infections … in the mother can be transmitted as a signal to the fetus, which can alter its brain development."

A century later, the same question has returned with COVID: Could infection during pregnancy subtly shape how children grow and learn? The new Massachusetts General Hospital study offers an early look at an answer.

KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF – the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.

Risky business

3 measures of risk that affect your portfolio

By STEPHEN KATES, CFP
Bankrate.com (TNS)

No risk, no return!

How many times have you heard that phrase or something similar?

It's usually meant to encourage. A rallying cry for entrepreneurship, industry and capitalism, it also alludes to the inverse – that high risk translates into high return. But when it comes to investing, it isn't quite so simple.

Risk vs. return in investing

While risk and potential return can be intimately related, it's not a one-to-one relationship, which is why managing risk in an investment portfolio is one of – if not the most – critical aspects of investing.

It is entirely possible to take huge risks and have no reasonable expectation of an outsize return. This might be most closely associated with gambling. If all you're doing is betting big and hoping for a payoff, the value of your risk is entirely dependent on the outcome. A positive result affirms the risk was worth it, even if the logic of the bet wasn't sound, and vice versa.

Certain types of systemic risk are, by their nature, hard to anticipate and harder to avoid. The COVID-19 pandemic was one such example. If we could foresee these risks, plan for them and hedge them, they wouldn't really be risks at all. In investing, we plan for and manage those risks through diversification and asset allocation.

The 3 types of risk

Prudent portfolio management should take into account a careful consideration of three key measures of risk.

- Risk tolerance is your willingness to accept risk of loss and can be felt as an emotional measure of the amount of pain or stress you can withstand as an investor.
- Risk exposure is the amount of risk your portfolio is actually exposed to based on the investments you hold.
- Risk capacity is your financial ability to withstand both acute and long-lasting losses within your portfolio. Put another way, this is a measurement of your financial fragility.

Risk tolerance

It is hard to test one's risk tolerance outside of a real-world situation that impacts your finances. Backtests and mock trading strategies can't duplicate the real experience of gaining or losing money in the market. Inexperienced investors often overestimate their risk tolerance, resulting in panic if it all goes wrong. It can be better to learn those lessons early, when you have only a little money at stake, instead of later in life when you're more likely to be managing larger sums.

Another complicating factor with measuring risk tolerance is the fact that one's risk tolerance can evolve over time. This is normal but it does mean that your portfolio needs to adapt to your relative comfort with risk. Some investors may become more comfortable with risk as they become better investors, while others may become more conservative as they approach retirement or feel the weight of potential losses.

Similar to Ernest Hemingway's famous quote about bankruptcy, anxiety over your risk of losses can happen slowly, and then all at once. Market volatility can arise swiftly and catch investors off guard. As seen in the graph above, investors enjoyed a relatively tame period between 2012 and 2020. In 2020, as the pandemic hit, volatility exploded, taking many investors by surprise.

If you only pay attention to your portfolio risk after witnessing substantial losses, it is too late to make the right changes. These kinds of surprises may leave you anxious and prone to emotional decision-making. Being forced to make financial decisions under duress is a recipe for regret.

Risk capacity

Awareness of your relative financial stability is key to judging your real risk capacity. Conducting a risk assessment and creating a financial plan is one of the most thorough ways to assess your financial weak points. Analyzing your cash flow, emergency fund, goal progression and income needs can shed light on how much wiggle room you might have if your finances or portfolio deteriorate by a certain amount.

For instance, if paying for your essential expenses, such as your groceries and mortgage, requires both spouses' incomes, then you are more susceptible to financial hardship if one person loses their job than someone who can cover those expenses on a single income. Neither income arrangement is right or wrong; it simply informs how you should manage your risk exposure and cash safety net.

Risk exposure

Exposure cuts both ways. Ratcheting up the risk exposure through higher allocations to stocks, cryptocurrency or options can increase a portfolio's potential returns – but also its potential losses. Over a given period of time, riskier investments don't always translate risk into opportunity or behave in easy-to-understand ways.

An investor with multiple sources of income, a robust emergency fund and dry powder on the sidelines can withstand risk exposure better than an investor who lives paycheck to paycheck and has no safety net due to market or income losses.

Measuring risk should be done using various methods, including average rate of return, beta, Sharpe ratio, standard deviation and maximum drawdown expectations. A basic understanding of these measures is useful for the average investor, but vital for self-directed investors who are pushing the envelope with risk.

Statistical measures of risk

- Beta: This evaluates the volatility of a single security or fund when compared to the market as a whole or its respective benchmark. A stock with a beta of 1 has the same volatility as the benchmark, while a beta of 2 is twice as volatile as the benchmark.
- Sharpe ratio: This formula is used to compare the historical return of an investment with its past volatility to determine whether excess returns are a result of risk or investment skill.
- Standard deviation: This measures the variation around the stock's average return. A high standard deviation means an investment has high variability and may experience a wide range of possible returns over a given period of time.
- Maximum drawdown: This is the largest drop in value an investment may experience from its highest to lowest point over a given period of time, based on historical records. As the saying goes, past performance is no indication of future results, and no single investment can be predicted. A word of caution: Drawdown measurements are backward looking and do not predict how much an asset can fall in the future. The more diversified the asset, the more consistent this measurement may be. For instance, the historical performance of a single stock offers less useful information than the historical performance of an entire index.

Aligning the 3 measures of risk in your portfolio

However you decide to measure and manage risk, it is critical that you align your risk exposure to your tolerance and capacity for risk. It can be tempting and easy to let your risk exposure drift higher as the market rallies over multiple years, but when corrections or bear markets do come, you don't want to be left watching your gains evaporate.

Ideally, all of these measures will align. However, this is usually rare.

There are many reasons that your risk tolerance might be more or less than your financial capacity for risk. Aligning your risk exposure properly should be a compromise between your risk tolerance and your risk capacity. The portfolio that suits you best should be dictated by the lesser of these two measures.

A key marker of a well-designed strategy should be the ability to remain invested through various market environments. A comprehensive financial plan will account for good and bad years. It is possible to be an above-average investor by simply achieving average returns for an above-average length of time.

While historical charts of indices such as the S&P 500 reveal down years, the majority of years not only have a positive return and some show double-digit percentage growth. Participating is the critical part, because if you can weather the bad years, you can enjoy the good ones.

Visit Bankrate online at bankrate.com.

FOOD

Hot new baking cookbooks

KEEP RIDING A SUGAR HIGH ALL THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

By NICOLE HVIDSTEN
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Fellow cookbook fans know that this time of year can't be beat as publishers release a tsunami of books hoping to land a spot on kitchen bookshelves and holiday gift lists.

While we've been immersed in books on fresh pasta, soups, appetizers and sauces and learning about culinary cultures throughout the world, our sweet tooth has us turning to a trio of new baking books again and again.

Stock up on butter, put on the coffee and sink in to these delicious offerings.

'Dorie's Anytime Cakes'

Dorie Greenspan's "Dorie's Anytime Cakes" (Harvest, $35) is the award-winning author's 15th book, one she considers a love letter to simple cakes. The chapters are helpfully categorized by cake type – round, loaf, small cake, etc. – with one dedicated to frostings, fillings and other flourishes that take a cake from simple to splashy when warranted or desired. The expert "getting started" advice ensures novice bakers will be successful, while the more than 100 recipes appeal to bakers of all skill levels and tastes – even those who don't like sweets. Many of the recipes conjure treasured memories for Greenspan, so be sure to read the notes. In addition to getting a new recipe, you'll feel like you're gaining a friend, too. The whimsical photo illustrations from Nancy Pappas are a delight, but if you're a baker who relies on photos for direction, you won't always find it.

Recipes to try: Baked-in-a-Skillet Gingerbread (below) and Old-Fashioned Marble Cake, because marble cake is the best of both cake worlds.

'Celebrate'

Fans of the "Great British Baking Show" know Paul Hollywood, but might forget that the charming judge in the tent is also a world-renowned baker and bestselling author. His latest book is "Celebrate: Joyful Baking All Year Round" (Bloomsbury, $40), and the name is very appropriate. The book has chapters by the season, with cakes and party bakes getting separate billing. In addition to stellar recipes for drip cakes, mojito cupcakes and the like, you'll also find savory fare like empanadas, gorditas and a sausage braid. But a favorite part of the book is Hollywood's introduction, where he urges us to celebrate the seasons, celebrate other cultures and celebrate each other. A great lesson, even if there weren't bakes to accompany it.

Recipes to try: Pear Bakewell Tart (below) and Chocolate Fudge Cake. Everyone should have a go-to chocolate cake recipe, and this can yours.

'Ready for Dessert, Revised'

David Lebovitz has just released "Ready For Dessert, Revised," which revisits the pastry chef's bestselling book from 2010 but with updated recipes, new recipes and stunning new photography (Ten Speed Press, $37.99). The wide-ranging book, with nearly 175 recipes, goes beyond traditional baking and into custards, souffles, candies, preserves and frozen desserts, making it a well-rounded tome for lovers of all things sweet. It, too, has a robust primer, from ingredients to techniques and equipment (he never bakes without a bench scraper in reach). Of course the recipes are the main attraction – we've earmarked too many to count – but Lebovitz's humor, stories and writing style are just as appealing.

Recipes to try: Banana Cake with Mocha Frosting (below) and Brown Sugar-Pecan Shortbread, a simple cookie that should be mandatory with a hot cup of coffee or tea.

Baked-in-a-Skillet Gingerbread

Makes about 12 servings

A cake made for the holiday season. It looks great in a cast-iron skillet, but it also will bake nicely in a 9-inch springform pan. Watch the baking time; it will need 40 to 45 minutes in the oven – start testing at the 40-minute mark.

- 2 c. plus 2 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 c. whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. fine sea salt
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves or freshly grated nutmeg
- 2/3 c. sugar
- 1/3 c. brown sugar
- 5 tbsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1/3 c. neutral oil
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1/3 c. unsulfured molasses
- 3/4 c. apple butter, plain or spiced
- 1/4 c. full-fat buttermilk, at room temperature
- 1/3 c. finely chopped crystallized ginger (see Cooking Tip)
- About 2 tbsp. sanding or turbinado sugar for topping
- About 3 tbsp. Swedish pearl sugar for topping (see Cooking Tip)

Center a rack in the oven and preheat it to 350 degrees. Coat a 10-inch cast-iron skillet with baker's or cooking spray. If you don't have a skillet, use a 9-inch springform pan.

Whisk the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, salt and cloves together.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a large bowl with a hand mixer, beat the granulated and brown sugars together with the butter at medium speed for about 3 minutes – you'll have a pasty mixture.

Pour in the oil and beat for another 2 minutes, occasionally scraping the bowl and beaters – the batter will thin out and become creamy. (Don't wash the measuring cup – use it for the molasses. The oily slick that's left in the cup will help the molasses slide out easily.) Add the egg and beat for a minute.

With the mixer on low, beat in the molasses, followed by the apple butter and another scraping. Add half the flour mixture and mix until it just disappears into the batter. Blend in the buttermilk, followed by the remainder of the flour mixture.

When they're almost incorporated, mix in the ginger. You'll have a thick, fragrant batter. Scrape it into the pan, nudging it into the corners and smoothing the top. Sprinkle over the sanding or turbinado sugar and then top with the pearl sugar, if using.

Bake for 43 to 48 minutes (if you're using a springform, start checking after 40 minutes), or until the top of the gingerbread is uniformly puffed all the way to the middle, the cake pulls away from the sides of the pan with a gentle tug and a tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.

Transfer the skillet to a rack and let the cake cool until it's just warm or has reached room temperature before cutting.

COOKING TIPS: Like all dried fruit, crystallized ginger can harden. To soften, soak it in very hot water for a minute, then drain and pat dry. The double sugar is a wonderful touch, but the cake is just as good plain or dusted with powdered sugar just before serving.

From "Dorie's Anytime Cakes" by Dorie Greenspan (Harvest, 2025)

Pear Bakewell Tart

Serves 8 to 10

From "Celebrate: Joyful Baking All Year Round," by Paul Hollywood, who included this classic British bake in his new book. Traditionally made with cherries, he used pears, which work beautifully with almond frangipane. "It really is a marriage made in heaven," he said.

FOR THE PIE DOUGH:

- 1 c. all-purpose flour, plus extra to dust
- 2 tbsp. powdered sugar
- 7 tbsp. chilled unsalted butter, diced
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 2 to 3 tsp. ice-cold water

For the frangipane:

- 7 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 c. superfine sugar (see Cooking Tip)
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1/3 c. plus 1 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 3/4 c. almond flour
- Drop of almond extract, optional

FOR ASSEMBLING:

- 7 tbsp. apricot preserves
- 1 (15-oz.) can pear halves in juice, drained (6 pear halves needed)
- 1/4 c. sliced almonds

To make the pie dough: Mix the flour and powdered sugar together in a large bowl. Add the butter and rub in using your fingers until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Make a well in the center.

In a small bowl, beat the egg with the lemon juice and 2 teaspoons cold water, then pour into the well and mix into the flour, using a table knife. Bring the dough together using one hand, adding a little more cold water if needed. Gently knead the pie dough into a ball and flatten to a disc. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Roll out the chilled pie dough on a lightly floured surface to 1/8 inch thick and use to line a 9-inch loose-bottomed tart pan, leaving a little excess overhanging the edge.

Line the tart crust with parchment and fill with a layer of pie weights (or uncooked rice). Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until the pastry is dry to the touch. Remove the paper and weights and return the tart crust to the oven for about 5 minutes, until it is very lightly colored. Using a small, sharp knife, trim away the excess pastry from the edge. Turn the oven down to 350 degrees.

To make the frangipane filling: Beat the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy, then beat in the eggs one at a time. Stir in the flour, almond flour and almond extract, if using. Put the frangipane into a piping bag fitted with a 3/4-inch plain piping tip.

Spread the apricot preserves over the base of the tart crust. Starting in the center, pipe the frangipane on top in a spiral to fill the crust. Slice the pear halves and arrange the slices, overlapping, on the frangipane.

Bake the tart for 10 minutes, then scatter the sliced almonds evenly on top and bake for an additional 15 minutes until golden. Transfer to a wire rack and cool before releasing the tart from the pan. Cut into slices to serve.

COOKING TIP: Using superfine sugar gives a smoother texture. Process granulated sugar in a food processor or coffee grinder to get the same results.

From "Celebrate: Joyful Baking All Year Round," by Paul Hollywood. (Bloomsbury, 2025).

Banana Cake with Mocha Frosting and Salted Candied Peanuts

Serves 12 to 16
Makes one two-layer 9-inch cake

This tall, scrumptious dessert is made by layering moist banana cake with a ganache-like frosting and topping it all off with handfuls of salted candied peanuts. Who can resist that?

FOR THE CAKE:

- 2 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 3/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 11/2 c. sugar
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp. instant espresso or coffee powder
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 6 tbsp. buttermilk, yogurt or sour cream, at room temperature
- 2 c. banana purée (3 to 4 very ripe bananas)
- 1 1/4 c. pecans or walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped

FOR THE CANDIED PEANUTS:

- 1 c. raw or unsalted lightly roasted peanuts (see Cooking Tip)
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 3 tbsp. water
- 1/2 tsp. flaky sea salt, such as fleur de sel or Maldon
- 1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon

FOR THE FROSTING:

- 10 oz. (280 g) bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 c. strong brewed coffee or espresso
- 10 tbsp. (140 g) unsalted or salted butter, cubed, at room temperature

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter the bottom and sides of two 9-inch round cake pans and line the bottoms with circles of parchment paper.

To make the cake: In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or by hand), beat together the 16 tablespoons butter and 1 1/2 cups sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the vanilla and espresso powder, then beat in the eggs one at a time, mixing until completely incorporated. Mix in half of the flour mixture, followed by the buttermilk and banana purée. Stir in the remaining flour mixture, then stir in the pecans or walnuts just until combined. Don't overmix.

Divide the batter evenly between the two prepared pans and use a spatula to spread it into even layers. Bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center of the cakes comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Let cool completely.

To make the peanuts: In a medium, heavy skillet over medium heat, combine the peanuts, ½ cup sugar and the water. When the sugar begins to liquefy, begin stirring. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until the sugar crystallizes. Decrease the heat to medium-low and continue to cook, stirring, letting the crystallized sugar on the bottom melt and brown slightly. Then, use a heatproof spatula to scrape up the liquefied sugar and continuously coat the peanuts with it, tilting the pan to help the sugar coat the nuts evenly.

Once the peanuts are a bit glossy and coated with syrup (there will still be some sugary crystals on them, which is normal), sprinkle the flaky salt and [illegible] teaspoon cinnamon over them. Stir the peanuts a couple of times, then scrape the candied peanuts onto a baking sheet and let cool completely.

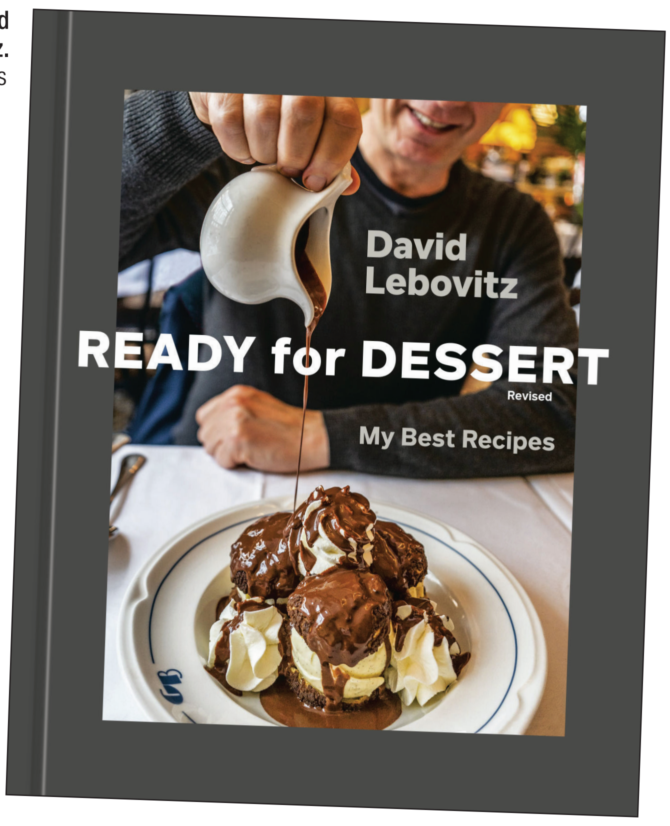
To make the frosting: In a medium heatproof bowl, combine the chocolate and coffee. Set the bowl over a pan of barely simmering water and stir occasionally with a whisk until the chocolate is melted and the mixture is smooth. Remove the bowl from the heat and whisk in the 10 tablespoons butter until combined. Let cool at room temperature until thick and spreadable, 10 to 20 minutes.

To assemble the cake: Run a knife around the sides of the cakes to help loosen them from the pans. Invert one cake onto a serving plate and peel off the parchment. Spread about ¾ cup of the mocha frosting over the surface of the cake. Invert the second cake layer, peel off the parchment, and place it over the frosted cake layer. Spread the remaining frosting evenly over the top and sides of the cake.

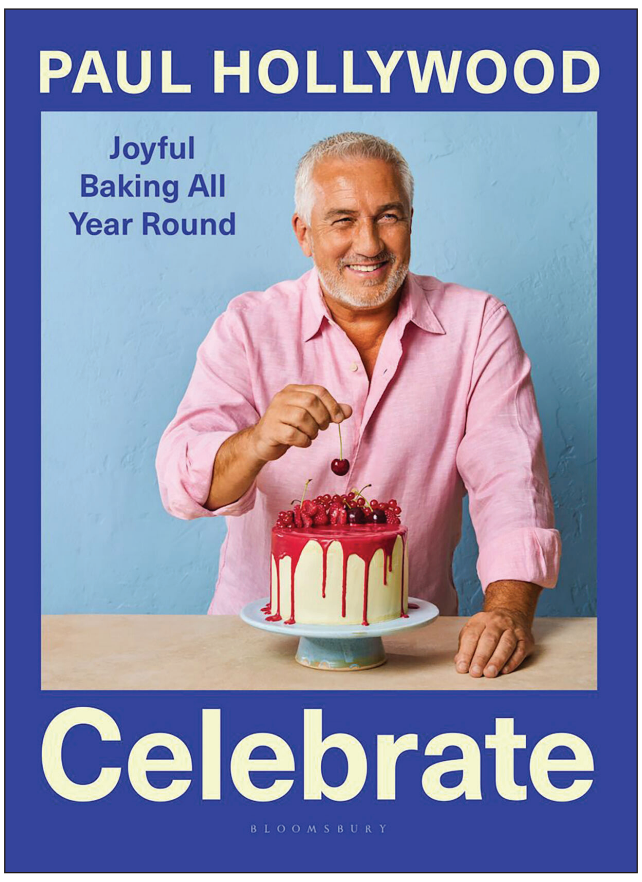
Coarsely chop 1 cup of the candied peanuts and sprinkle them over the top of the cake.

COOKING TIPS: If you can't find raw peanuts, use unsalted roasted peanuts that aren't too darkly roasted. You can also replace the peanuts with untoasted almonds. The recipe makes more candied peanuts than you'll need – leftovers are great sprinkled over ice cream or just eaten out of hand. You can also use 1 cup store-bought honey-roasted peanuts in lieu of making your own salted candied peanuts.

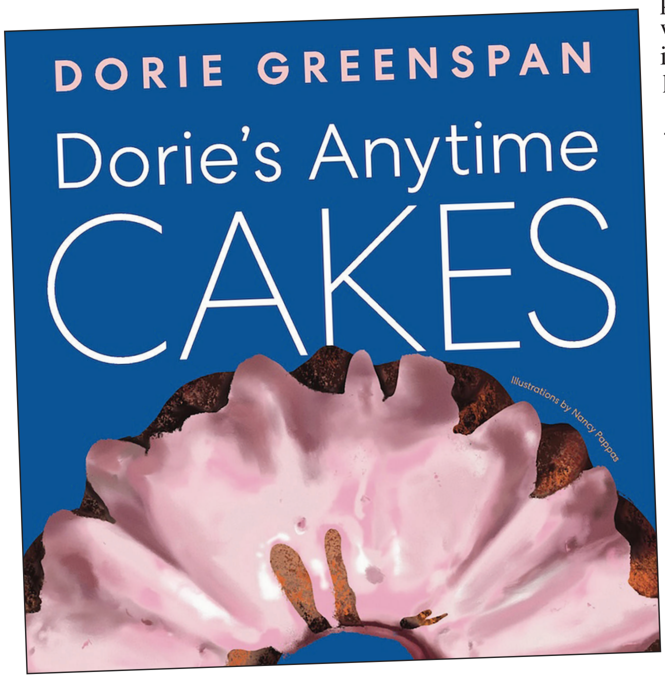
From "Ready For Dessert, Revised," by David Lebovitz (Ten Speed Press, 2025).



"Ready for Dessert," by David Lebovitz.
Ten Speed Press / TNS



Bloomsbury Publishing / TNS
"Celebrate: Joyful Baking All Year Round," by Paul Hollywood.



"Dorie's Anytime Cakes," by Dorie Greenspan.
Harvest / TNS

"Declaration of Independence," by John Trumbull, 1818. Ken Burns' six-part documentary "The American Revolution" is on PBS.
Yale University Art Gallery / TNS

In *'The American Revolution,'* Ken Burns' filmmakers go back to the beginning

By PETER LARSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

ANAHEIM, Calif. — When the new Ken Burns documentary series "The American Revolution" premieres on PBS on Sunday, Nov. 16, it will mark the end of a filmmaking journey that began almost a decade ago.

"Ken always says these films take 10 years," says Sarah Botstein, who co-directed the series with David Schmidt and Burns. "From the second he goes, 'We're going to make "The American Revolution"' to when it broadcasts is 10 years."

That's two years longer than the actual length of the American Revolution, but the Founding Fathers and the Continental Army were making history in real time, while Burns and his Florentine Films team were reading and researching nearly 250 years later.

"I've worked on a few of these big epic series," says Botstein, who joined Burns' filmmaking world in 1997. "Our process stays the same with any topic.

"The specific things that have to do with the 18th century and the American Revolution are different from jazz music or World War II or Vietnam," she says of past docuseries from Burns and his collaborators. "But we start by immersing ourselves in the topic.

"We read a lot. We meet a lot of people. We meet scholars. We're fundraising. Geoff Ward [who writes screenplays for Burns' series] starts to familiarize himself with the topic. He's reading and writing and thinking about the story he's telling.

"We just jump into the deep end of the pool and try to figure out who's alive that's given this a lot of thought or has some direct relationship to the history," Botstein says.

A few years in, the team starts interviewing the historians and scholars they've settled on.

"I've been likening it like going to Jane Kamensky's senior seminar on the American Revolution," Botstein says of interviewing the history professor and current president and CEO of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and his home, Monticello.

"Or Vince Brown's senior seminar on the American Revolution," she adds, referring to the Harvard professor of African and African-American Studies. "We basically just go to school with the American Revolution."

The interviews aren't free-form, notes Schmidt, who joined Botstein on a recent video interview.

"We go with a list of questions, but we're not trying to connect Point A to Point B," he says. "'Could you please lead us?' We talk about the American Revolution. We'll see what can make it into the film later."

"The American Revolution" will be broadcast on PBS stations in two-hour episodes over six consecutive nights from Sunday, Nov. 16, through Friday, Nov. 21, with the first of numerous rebroadcasts as a marathon on Saturday, Nov. 22, and Sunday, Nov. 23.

In an interview edited for length and clarity, Schmidt and Botstein discussed what they learned in their deep dive into the American Revolution, how concepts such as democracy and liberty shifted during and after the revolution, what the series might mean to viewers today, and more.

Q: Most of us remember a few highlights about the American Revolution: Paul Revere's ride, Lexington and Concord, Washington crossing the Delaware. What did you learn in the deep dive you took?

DAVID SCHMIDT: There are two things that definitely were unlocked in my brain that I think are incredibly important. One is that while the American Revolution did win American independence, did unite the states, did create the republic that we operate under, those weren't the goal at the start of the war.

At the time of Lexington and Concord, the goal was to liberate Boston, have a redress of all these grievances, and restore the way we operated within the British Empire to the way it used to work back when we were all happy. Independence, union, and republic were outcomes of the revolution. They were necessary in order to win the revolution.

The other, which should be so obvious, is something that Maya Jasanoff, [a historian specializing in the British Empire], says in the film: "The United States came out of violence." That should be self-evident when we're talking about a war. But I don't think it is.

SARAH BOTSTEIN: I think how long the revolution took. And, obviously, nobody knows how history is going to go. We've all been talking about this. Ken will say, "George Washington didn't know he's going to be George Washington." The founders couldn't decide if they were going to declare independence or get the aid of a foreign power and try to throw off the Crown.

Nobody knows how things are going to happen. We feel that today. There are large pieces of the story that I think are left out, as your question suggests, of the four or five things we collectively think we know about the revolution.

It's also the underdog story of all time. It's so surprising and unlikely that we're going to win. It sort of comes down to us [through time] as this great thing that we did – rather than this totally unlikely, surprising thing that we did.

Q: Talk about democracy, and how it became this revered result of the revolution when the series shows its origins as almost unplanned.

SCHMIDT: Democracy is something that we as Americans have struggled to define for 250 or more years. Some of the historians in the film make the point that some of the big-name founding fathers were actually afraid of democracy. They thought it similar to anarchy. If you give power to the individual, every individual, what do you have left?

I think that democracy, such as it came out of the American Revolution, was, as the writer Bill Hogeland says in the film, an unintended consequence of the revolution. What that is, I believe, is that in order to win this war, the leaders of the patriot coalition had to offer more rights and freedoms than had existed before the revolution. And you see that play out in the Bill of Rights.

Democracy, one man, one vote, actually isn't something that happens at the end of the revolution. It just kind of increases through the ages of the revolution and continues through the course of American history.

Q: The series also makes clear that the liberty and freedom the founders fought for in the revolution didn't apply to everyone. Black Americans, Native Americans, women are not fully vested.

BOTSTEIN: The Declaration of Independence says "all," right? So if you say "all," even if you don't mean it, eventually people are going to hear that and be inspired to push, as Maggie Blackhawk [a law professor and legal historian at New York University] says, the levers of power.

We spent a lot of time thinking about how to edit the scene on the Declaration of Independence. How to square all the complexities and ironies and complicated things about who wrote it, when it was written, and what it meant then to what it means now. It took us a long time to figure out how to celebrate the Declaration of Independence, how to point out its ironies and its failings and to see it as inspirational.

SCHMIDT: What might surprise people is how quickly people at the margins pick up the ideas of the Declaration and begin using them for themselves. There's Lemuel Hayes [a prominent Black minister and Revolutionary War soldier] by the end of the year writing that liberty is everybody's. I think it will surprise people that people at the time recognized the inconsistency in some of the arguments patriots were making.

Certainly, Abigail Adams was saying that. Phyllis Wheatley [the first Black American to publish a book of poetry] was saying that. It's not just a presentist interpretation looking back on the past. It's letting the people of the time themselves talk about that.

Q: Both of you worked on Ken's series on Vietnam, which might be the most visually documented war in history. Here, there were no photographs, video or film. How did you adapt?

Botstein: I think we got better at it as we went. It's pretty daunting, and I certainly was like what the (heck) are we going to do? We're making a film before photographs and newsreels.

So first, we have to bring in all the stuff that's been done over 250 years in terms of paintings and interpretations. Then, think about this as a story of land, right? It's a vast continent. We moved north to south during the war. It was fought in every season. The weather plays a major role.

We're a fairly organized, neurotic group of people. So we think, "OK, we've got five or six years. We've got to be winter here, summer here [for video shots of the locations where key events occurred]. We got better as went. I think in terms of how we worked with the reenactments and re-enactors.

We would obviously go to Lexington and Concord. They're going to have a major reenactment. We're going to go shoot it with a bazillion cameras. But we're also going to have to get to know a few of those re-enactors and do smaller shoots.

Everything was very impressionistic. We shot through glass, we shot at a distance, we always had a smoke machine with us.

And we were fairly reliant on the extreme integrity of the living history museums, places like Colonial Williamsburg, Sturbridge Village [in Massachusetts], the Longhouse at Ganondagan in upstate New York. Those people were extremely generous to us.

SCHMIDT: An 18th-century war was so different from a 21st-century war. You can't really imagine the human effort it takes to make the war effort work without seeing the people and movement in some way. That's why we needed the re-enactors. You need to see them walking, going through mud.

Thousands of people, not just soldiers; there are women and children and other civilians following the army. There's animals. It's a moving village. You also want to see what it took to build the munitions, hammering away at a rifle as it's being made. You want to see people's hands make the uniforms. This is really a handmade war effort.

Q: People watching this series can learn a lot about the American Revolution. What lessons can it provide people today?

BOTSTEIN: Annette Gordon-Reed has a great bite at the very end of the film where she says she believes that the founders wanted us to be an engaged, active group of citizens. Education is at the heart of the founding principles of the United States. Citizenship is right behind it. You're going from being a subject [of the Crown] to a citizen in the American Revolution.

And over the last 250 years, we've made good on who's a citizen, who has a right to vote, who is an active member of this now-working republic-democracy. So I think citizenship is at the heart of the movie, as is patriotism.

I think being patriotic doesn't mean that you just stand around mindlessly waving a flag. It means you are an active member of your community. You know who's on your local school board. You care about your local senate race. You don't pick up your head every four years and scream about the president.

They were worried about executive overreach. They were worried about a too powerful executive branch. The more I learned, the more I thought this Congress was what they worried about. They wanted Congress to be the voice of the people and to check the president.

We need to actually know what the founders actually thought about. My takeaway is a really interesting version of patriotism and citizenship that I did not understand 10 years ago, and I hope that comes through in the show.

SCHMIDT: One thing I get out of this story is that the times they lived through were incredibly uncertain. And in that uncertainty, there's a lot of scary things. There can be terror in that, but there's also a lot of possibility. People came together and did the work and got something done.

I think that's a universal lesson that at times of uncertainty – and I don't think that's a particularly controversial take, that this is a time of uncertainty – there's possibility in that uncertainty.

Ariana Grande, left, and Cynthia Erivo in "Wicked: For Good."

Giles Keyte / Universal Pictures / TNS

MOVIE REVIEW

Grande shines but *'Wicked: For Good'* unable to defy gravity

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

As it turns out, "Wicked" is not too big to fail. In fact, it may be all the excess baggage that weighs down the second installment, making it impossible for the sequel "Wicked: For Good" to defy gravity.

Though the first part "Wicked" did take its sweet time to achieve liftoff, while building out a world that came from over a century of storytelling (plus revising and revisiting), starting with Frank L. Baum's 1900 fantasy novel "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," the 1939 film adaptation "The Wizard of Oz," starring Judy Garland, Gregory Maguire's 1995 novel "Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West," and the Tony-winning blockbuster Broadway musical with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz and a book by Winnie Holzman adapted from that.

With "Wicked: For Good," directed by Jon M. Chu, written by Holzman and Dana Fox, not only do we have to make our way through those many layers of reference, we have to bushwhack through the cultural overgrowth that was the marketing and publicity blitz for "Wicked" – the merch, the memes featuring stars Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, co-star Jonathan Bailey's newly designated status as People's Sexiest Man Alive, the much-documented friendship between Grande and co-star Bowen Yang, etc., etc.

All of that extracurricular material hangs around "Wicked: For Good" like overgrown vines to beat back before we even get to the layers of artifice of the filmmaking – the elaborate production and costume design, makeup, CGI-enhanced sets, talking animals, bursting into song. Instead of transporting us to another world, all this artifice is more distracting than anything else.

Then there are the bold swings (shocking character design) and uneven performances (Michelle Yeoh's miscasting as Madame Morrible is never more obvious) that make "For Good" an unwieldy blimp of a movie. Thank goodness that Grande's performance as Glinda pulls it back from the brink of Hindenburg-level disaster.

If "Wicked" belonged to Elphaba (Erivo), "For Good" is decidedly Glinda's picture. This is her moment to grow: in her beliefs, in her own power, and in her relationship to herself and to her friend Elphaba. Their culminating duet, "For Good," celebrating their friendship, is this movie's climatic tune akin to "Defying Gravity," but the lessons and emotional weight of the song belong to Glinda (and not just because she's been considering a trademark on the word "good"). She is the one who has been radically changed by knowing Elphaba, and her understanding of what "good" means, what it looks like in action.

> **'Wicked: For Good'**
>
> ★★
>
> **MPA rating:** PG (for action/violence, some suggestive material and thematic material)
>
> **Running time:** 2:18
>
> **How to watch:** In theaters

Elphaba's rebellion has resulted in her being painted as a "wicked witch," after defying gravity – and the Wizard (Jeff Goldblum). The architect of the propaganda campaign, seen in banners and posters splashed across Oz and Munchkinland, is Madame Morrible, who knows that "good" – represented by Glinda, in her pink bubble, needs a contrasting foil to exist, which is in this case, "wicked" Elphaba, who fights for the rights of the talking animals that have been banished under the Wizard's tyranny.

Here's where the authoritarian allegories in "Wicked: For Good" go all mushy. Elphaba, who once idolized the Wizard, was disillusioned when she realized he couldn't read the magical book the Grimmerie, and that his powers were all smoke, mirrors and oppression. Her outrage stems from the injustice toward the talking animals with whom she feels a kinship, having been bullied for her green skin, and her love for her teacher Dr. Dillamund (a goat). But Elphaba and Glinda's motivations only feel real when it comes to each other, everything else is just extraneous.

The love triangle among Glinda, Elphaba and the dashing Fiyero (Bailey) doesn't feel as legible as the friendship betrayal between the two women. For better or for worse, neither actress has as much intense chemistry with Bailey as they do with each other, so an elaborate wedding and tree-bound love scene just come off as awkward and silly more than anything else.

Much of the issues that plague "For Good" have to do with the nature of splitting "Wicked" into Act 1 and Act 2 movies, released a year apart, especially when Act 1 hits such a height as "Defying Gravity." It was always going to be downhill from there, but with a year's worth of anticipation, awards races and online chatter, "For Good" can't help but be disappointing. It gets too convoluted trying to track character motivations, betrayal and backstabbing, "Wicked" lore and "Wizard of Oz" details, which all come together into a strange and unsatisfying jumble.

Thanks to Grande's emotional performance, what does shine through is Glinda's personal story about embracing change, stepping into her own power and defining what it means to be "good," on her own terms – not because it's her brand. This is decidedly Glinda's movie, and that is the one good thing.

DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

'The American Revolution' presents a fresh picture of America's complex founding

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Back in 1990, Ken Burns made his reputation with "The Civil War," a sprawling, multipart documentary that caused a sensation, set a standard and sealed the style he's applied to practically everything he's done since — measured and hypnotic (some would say slow), with photos and paintings scanned for revealing detail, actors reading primary documents and, more likely than not, the voice of narrator Peter Coyote guiding you through.

With the six-part "The American Revolution," premiering Sunday and continuing nightly through Friday on PBS, Burns' longtime home, he has created a sort of prequel to that series, looking at a war for independence that was also a civil war and in which enslaved Black Americans and Indigenous peoples played a part. Burns has crossed this subject before, with films dedicated wholly to Thomas Jefferson (1997) and Benjamin Franklin (2022), not to mention series on Vietnam and the Second World War. But this is foundational stuff for a filmmaker specializing in American figures, institutions and events – the Dust Bowl, Prohibition, women's suffrage, baseball, the buffalo, Muhammad Ali, the Central Park Five, Frank Lloyd Wright, the National Parks and Mark Twain. In the history class of my mind, his films comprise the syllabus.

Burns, co-directing with Sarah Botstein and David Schmidt, is not an academic, but he knows how to marshal those troops. His gathered historians and scholars, including women, Black Americans and Native Americans, come at the subject from different angles, some with special areas of expertise. Along with letters, memoirs, speeches, pamphlets and newspaper extracts read by a cast that includes Meryl Streep, Kenneth Branagh, Morgan Freeman, Claire Danes, Matthew Rhys, Edward Norton, Michael Keaton, Laura Linney, Craig Ferguson, Samuel L. Jackson, Tom Hanks, Adam Arkin, Damian Lewis, Keith David and Paul Giamatti, once again suiting up as John Adams, they present a complex picture of a story often obscured in red, white and blue certainties. Burns and company are not aiming to present a neat picture; if they were, "The American Revolution" (written by frequent collaborator Geoffrey C. Ward) would not last 12 hours.

The revolution's greatest hits are all here, from petitioning the king of England for a redress of grievances to a Declaration of Independence. The Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party ("They dressed like Indians, kinda," says Native American author Philip Deloria), the midnight ride of Paul Revere, Thomas Paine publishing "Common Sense," the Declaration of Independence, George Washington crossing the Delaware, Bunker Hill, Benedict Arnold (he was very good before he was very bad, but touchy), John Paul Jones and Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier de La Fayette, 19 years old and looking for action. French money and the French navy were crucial to the American victory. All are presented in a way that freshens even what you know, or think you do.

> **'The American Revolution'**
>
> **Rating:** TV-14
>
> **How to watch:** Premieres Nov. 16 at 8 p.m. ET on PBS

The point is made, not for the first time, that for women, slaves and natives, the hope that liberty would be more liberally applied was not fulfilled. African Americans fought with the colonists at Lexington and Concord, the very beginning of the war, though three times as many more would join with the British, who seemed the better door to freedom, but slaves were returned by the victors to their masters. (White colonists used "slavery" to describe their own position vis-à-vis the English, without irony.) "For us, the Mohawk people, it was survival, period," says historian Darren Bonaparte, "and you didn't know which side was going to be the best choice." We know how that history went. Women carried bodies from the battlefield, oversaw their burial and got the vote in 1920.

Things go this way and that; fortunes reverse and reverse again. The war, and what could go on around the war – sexual violence, vigilantism, thievery, arson – was exceptionally violent, a violence Burns does a good job of communicating. Not only armies but whole civilian populations were on the move, depending on what side they were on. Among the American troops, there were mutinies and desertions and soldiers simply going home when their enlistment was up. (Nobody was getting paid, anyway.) During a hard winter at Valley Forge, which became for a time the fourth largest city in America, Washington was not always confident in his army's survival, writing that his men would soon be "reduced to one or the other of these things; starve, dissolve or disperse in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner they can." We know how it turned out, of course.

What distinguishes "The American Revolution" from other Burns works is its emphasis on the progress of war, battle by battle, with old maps and new 3D maps overlaid with arrows and lines and blue and red bars to represent the movement and position of colonial and British armies. Contemporary battlefield sketches, grand postwar history paintings, elegant portraits of the major military and political figures, along with watercolor illustrations and unobtrusive live-action recreations bring the tale to life.

As in other Burns projects, the narrative is knit together out of many individual stories, but it's Washington, the commander of the army, who stands out here – as he literally did in life, measuring 6 feet 3 when the average height was 5 feet 7. Described here as the "glue" that held the not-quite-country's factions together, his enumerated blunders as a tactician were mitigated by his effectiveness as a leader; he could change the course of a battle merely by appearing on the field.

That Washington owned slaves (a lot of them), as did Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, is well-known; that, as one of America's wealthiest men, he speculated in Indian land (as did Jefferson, Franklin and Patrick Henry) was new to me, as was his ordering the complete destruction of the villages of the British-allied Seneca and Cayuga – "You will not by any means listen to any overture for peace, before the total ruin of their settlements is effected." In the words of historian William Hogeland, he had "a ruthless and intense focus on his own interests, which makes him exactly like every other member of his class; it's just that he became George Washington."

On the verge of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, when it seems that the democratic project may be going down the tubes, the demagoguery against which the founders warned has become the order of the day, and war is being waged on settled history, as ideological functionaries draw a curtain over whatever might make MAGA feel bad, "The American Revolution" stands its ground. And fundamentally, it's a celebration – our less perfect union has made it this far, so far.

Focus Features / ZUMA Press / TNS

Jessie Buckley, left, and Paul Mescal in "Hamnet."

The 12 movies we're most looking forward to this holiday season

By AMY NICHOLSON, MARK OLSEN, JOSHUA ROTHKOPF, JOSH ROTTENBERG and GLENN WHIPP
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

20th Century Studios / TNS

Zoe Saldaña as Neytiri in "Avatar: Fire and Ash."

LOS ANGELES — It wouldn't be an awards season without a few last-minute gifts under the tree, set to sweep the table clear. This year, those include everything from Timothée Chalamet's cosmic ping-pong epic "Marty Supreme" to a new "Avatar" sequel from James Cameron, whom we've learned to never count out on Oscar night. We're also looking forward to the kind of dumb counterprogramming that Christmas miracles are built on. A new "Anaconda" awaits, a prospect that can't be ignored. Leave room in your movie diet for candy that's semi-bad for you. One can't feast on tearjerkers alone.

'Hamnet' (Nov. 26)

Since its world premiere at the Telluride Film Festival, Chloé Zhao 's aching story of love and loss has won audience awards at festivals around the world: London, San Diego, Toronto, Spain. If Telluride had such a prize, it would have won there too as it left moviegoers openly weeping as they waited in line for the restrooms afterward. Perhaps the prospect of this kind of emotional devastation gives you pause. Would it help if I told you that the first part of the movie, detailing the courtship of a young Shakespeare (Paul Mescal) in love, is primal and electric? And that Jessie Buckley, playing the Bard's future wife, is so extraordinary that she'll go on to win more honors than the movie itself? Just go see it. There's no better place to cry than in the darkness of a movie theater.

– Glenn Whipp

'The Secret Agent' (Nov. 26)

This Brazilian import by director Kleber Mendonça Filho killed us at Cannes. It's the kind of zippy, immersive crime thriller that reminds you of the international lingua franca that Scorsese all but invented with "Goodfellas." As the country's '70s-era military dictatorship wreaks havoc, decent people privately put up a complex resistance over years. The real reason you need to see this one is Wagner Moura, who you may have noticed in "Civil War" and Netflix's "Narcos," but who here makes a persuasive bid to join the highest echelon of leading men: furious, impassioned and haunted by a backstory conveyed with a minimum of means.

– Joshua Rothkopf

'Five Nights at Freddy's 2' (Dec. 5)

More rampaging animatronic puppets? Yes, please. If you think we're kidding, slow your roll: The first one, which we didn't hate, understood the ominous, moldering potential of a kiddie restaurant gone to seed. And with a cast that includes Josh Hutcherson, Mckenna Grace and a mini-"Scream" reunion in Matthew Lillard and Skeet Ulrich, the horror faithful should line up for a second helping of trauma. Breathe in this factoid for a second: The first "Freddy" is far and away Blumhouse's highest-grossing movie, more than "Get Out" or "M3GAN," by $120 million. People like this franchise. You could too.

– Joshua Rothkopf

'Kill Bill: The Whole Bloody Affair' (Dec. 5)

The recent craze for revivals and rereleases has spurred something many fans have long clamored to see: Quentin Tarantino's complete "Kill Bill: The Whole Bloody Affair." While the film was broken up into twoparts for its original release, this new assembly combines the two versions (with a few tweaks) to fully convey the wild genre mashup of Tarantino's original vision. In its tale of a woman fighting her way through a list of people who wronged her on the way to the man who betrayed her, "The Whole Bloody Affair" makes Uma Thurman's performance even more impressive as she slashes her way toward revenge, redemption and an unlikely grace.

– Mark Olsen

'Ella McCay' (Dec. 12)

James L. Brooks is one of Hollywood's great humanists – and Lord knows we need those more than ever. Fifteen years since releasing his previous film "How Do You Know," the "Broadcast News" and "Terms of Endearment" writer-director returns with a political comedy set in the Obama era about an idealistic lieutenant governor (Emma Mackey) thrust into the power seat when her mentor, played by Albert Brooks, heads to Washington. With a stacked cast including Jamie Lee Curtis, Woody Harrelson, Rebecca Hall and Kumail Nanjiani, "Ella McCay" promises to deliver what this filmmaker does best: funny, clear-eyed storytelling about the quiet heroism of trying (and sometimes failing) to do the right thing.

– Josh Rottenberg

'Avatar: Fire and Ash' (Dec. 19)

After 2009's "Avatar" reprogrammed the blockbuster, James Cameron showed no signs of coming up for air. Second sequel "Fire and Ash" plunges Jake and Neytiri into fresh conflict as their family faces down a ruthless Na'vi clan known as the Ash People. With Sam Worthington, Zoë Saldaña, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang and Kate Winslet returning, this third installment promises a darker, more emotional turn and another leap in visual ambition. And with two more sequels already in the works, Cameron seems determined to outlast not just his critics, but possibly civilization itself.

– Josh Rottenberg

'The Housemaid' (Dec. 19)

Paul Feig's flair for crowd-pleasers about catty women has been tilting from comedy to thriller ever since the cult success of 2018's "A Simple Favor." He's a good pick to direct this adaptation of Freida McFadden's dark and pleasingly pulpy bestseller about a maid who moves into a family's posh home and makes a major mess. All eyes will be on Sydney Sweeney and Amanda Seyfried playing, respectively, a damaged servant and her new boss, but I'm curious to get a longer look at the star potential of Brandon Sklenar ("It Ends With Us,""Drop"), who is emerging as a leading man.

– Amy Nicholson

'Is This Thing On?' (Dec. 19)

Bradley Cooper's two previous efforts as director – "A Star Is Born" and "Maestro" – had the air of purposeful masterworks, looking to make bold, sweeping statements about life and art. For his latest film, "Is This Thing On?," there's the feeling of a step-back, an attempt to make something smaller, simpler and looser while no less emotionally committed. Will Arnett shows previously unexplored dramatic depths as a man who, in the free-fall of an impending divorce, undertakes stand-up comedy as a therapeutic release. The result is a tender, bittersweet ballad to anyone who feels they may not be fully over yet, especially when indications say otherwise.

– Mark Olsen

'Anaconda' (Dec. 25)

Even if you have fond memories of the ultra-silly 1997 original and the four official sequels it shed, it's a fair bet you don't remember any plot details. Nor do you need to. Big snake. People getting chomped. That's it. To go a step further, this meta-comedy reboot will almost certainly be a lot smarter than what's come before. Two middle-aged friends – Paul Rudd and Jack Black (recapturing his gleam-in-the-eye mania from "School of Rock") – decide to remake their favorite guilty '90s pleasure as a no-budget indie flick. After their snake handler's docile specimen has an onset mishap, the real thing slithers into view.

– Joshua Rothkopf

'Marty Supreme' (Dec. 25)

Timothée Chalamet learned guitar to play Bob Dylan in last year's "A Complete Unknown." That's impressive, but I'm more eager to see his pingpong skills in Josh Safdie's biopic loosely based on 1958 men's singles table tennis champion Marty "The Needle" Reisman, who flipped the script on Theodore Roosevelt by speaking loudly with a very small paddle. The buzz is that Chalamet has been coached by former American Olympian Wei Wang and that "Marty Supreme" might be the all-too-rare Oscar contender that's game to take a big swing. As a bonus, it's got one of my favorite rising starlets, Odessa A'zion.

– Amy Nicholson

'No Other Choice' (Dec. 25)

A longtime passion project for filmmaker Park Chan-wook, this adaptation of a 1997 Donald Westlake novel somehow feels up-to-the-minute timely. Dedicated Yoo Mansu (Lee Byung-hun), a veteran employee at a paper company, loses his job following a corporate buyout and struggles to find work that will provide for his family. Out of desperation, he plans to kill off any competitors for a promising new job he's interviewing for. In part thanks to the lead performance by "Squid Game" star Lee, there is a warmth and charm to go along with Park's exacting craft and formalism in this vicious satire of the zero-sum mindset of current economies.

– Mark Olsen

'The Testament of Ann Lee' (Dec. 25)

This is a genuinely strange movie, but that's the vibe you want from a film that tackles the life of the founder of the Shakers religious sect, doing so in the form of a musical, complete with songs (more like chants) and dances that pulsate with whirling-dervish fervor. Amanda Seyfried gives it her all playing the title character, the real-life leader of a movement devoted to gender equality and sexual abstinence. It's directed by Mona Fastvold, who co-wrote it with her partner Brady Corbet, making this something of a supplement to "The Brutalist" (including both films' Oscar-winning composer Daniel Blumberg). You'll learn a lot about the Shakers and maybe not enough about Ann Lee beyond her zealotry. But the herky-jerky song-and-dance sequences are wild, a potent reminder that America has long been the land of the free and the home of the rave.

– Glenn Whipp

BOOKS

THE LITTLE-KNOWN STORY BEHIND one of Disneyland's most recognizable ride songs

By TODD MARTENS
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

When Xavier "X" Atencio was plucked by Walt Disney in 1965 to be one of his early theme park designers, he was slotted on a number of projects that placed him out of his comfort zone.

Atencio, for instance, never would have envisioned himself a songwriter.

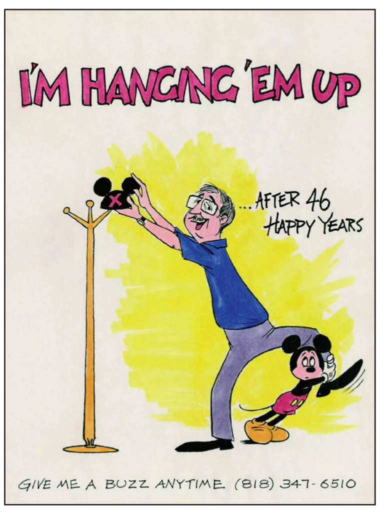
One of Atencio's first major projects with Walt Disney Imagineering – WED Enterprises (for Walter Elias Disney), as it was known at the time – was Pirates of the Caribbean. In the mid-'60s when Atencio joined the Pirates team, the attraction was well underway, with the likes of fellow animators-turned-theme park designers Marc Davis and Claude Coats crafting many of its exaggerated characters and enveloping environments. Atencio's job? Make it all make sense by giving it a cohesive story. While Atencio had once dreamed of being a journalist, his work as an animator had led him astray of a writer's path.

Atencio would not only figure it out but end up as the draftman of one of Disneyland's most recognizable songs, "Yo Ho (A Pirate's Life for Me)." In the process, he was key in creating the template for the modern theme park dark ride, a term often applied to slow-moving indoor attractions. Such career twists and turns are detailed in a new book about Atencio, who died in 2017. "Xavier 'X' Atencio: The Legacy of an Artist, Imagineer, and Disney Legend" (Disney Editions), written by three of his family members, follows Atencio's unexpected trajectory, starting from his roots in animation (his resume includes "Fantasia," the Oscar-winning short "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" and even stop-motion work in "Mary Poppins").

For Pirates of the Caribbean, Atencio is said to have received little direction from Disney, only that the park's patriarch was unhappy with previous stabs at a narration and dialogue, finding them leaning a bit stodgy. So he knew, essentially, what not to do. Atencio, according to the book, immersed himself in films like Disney's own "Treasure Island" and pop-cultural interpretations of pirates, striving for something that felt borderline caricature rather than ripped from the history books.

Indeed, Atencio's words – some of those quoted in the book, such as "Avast there! Ye come seeking adventure and salty old pirates, aye?" – have become shorthand for how to speak like a pirate. The first scene written for the attraction was the mid-point auction sequence, a section of the ride that was changed in 2017 due to its outdated cultural implications. In the original, a proud redheaded pirate is the lead prisoner in a bridal auction, but today the "wench" has graduated to pirate status of her own and is helping to auction off stolen goods.

At first, Atencio thought he had over-written the scene, noticing



Disney Enterprises Inc. / Disney Editions / TNS

Xavier "X" Atencio retired from Disney in 1984 after four-plus decades with the company. He drew his own retirement announcement. (Reprinted from "Xavier 'X' Atencio: The Legacy of An Artist, Imagineer, and Disney Legend.")

that dialogue overlapped with one another. In a now-famous theme park moment, and one retold in the book, Atencio apologized to Disney, who shrugged off Atencio's insecurity.

"Hey, X, when you go to a cocktail party, you pick up a little conversation here, another conversation there," Disney told the animator. "Each time people will go through, they'll find something new."

This was the green light that Atencio, Davis and Coats needed to continue developing their attraction as one that would be a tableau of scenes rather than a strict plot.

Tying it all together, Atencio thought, should be a song. Not a songwriter himself, of course, Atencio sketched out a few lyrics and a simple melody. As the authors write, he turned to the thesaurus and made lists of traditional "pirating" words. He presented it to Disney and, to Atencio's surprise, the company founder promptly gave him the sign off.

"Yo Ho (A Pirate's Life for Me)," Atencio would relay, was a challenge as the ride doesn't have a typical beginning and ending, meaning the tune needed to work with whatever pirate vignette we were sailing by. Ultimately, the song, with music by George Bruns, underlines the ride's humorous feel, allowing the looting, the pillaging and the chasing of women, another scene that has been altered over the years, to be delivered with a playful bent.

The song "altered the trajectory" of Atencio's career. While Atencio was not considered a musical person – "No, not at all," says his daughter Tori Atencio McCullough, one of the book's co-authors – the biography reveals how music became a signature aspect of his work. The short "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom," for instance, is a humorous tale about the discovery of music. And elsewhere in Atencio's career he worked on the band-focused opening animations for "Mickey Mouse Club."

"That one has a pretty cool kind of modern instrument medley in

Disney Enterprises Inc. / Disney Editions / TNS

Xavier "X" Atencio got his start in animation. Here, he is seen drawing dinosaurs for a sequence in "Fantasia." (Reprinted from "Xavier 'X' Atencio: The Legacy of An Artist, Imagineer, and Disney Legend.")

the middle," Kelsey McCullough, Atencio's granddaughter and another one of the book's authors, says of "Mickey Mouse Club." "It was interesting, because when we lined everything up, it was like, 'Of course he felt like the ride needed a song.' Everything he had been doing up to that point had a song in it. Once we looked at it from that perspective, it was sort of unsurprising to us. He was doing a lot around music."

Atencio would go on to write lyrics for the Country Bear Jamboree and the Haunted Mansion. While the Haunted Mansion vacillates between spooky and lighthearted imagery, it's Atencio's "Grim Grinning Ghosts" that telegraphs the ride's tone and makes it clear it's a celebratory attraction, one in which many of those in the afterlife prefer to live it up rather than haunt.

Despite his newfound music career, Atencio never gave up drawing and contributing concepts to Disney theme park attractions. Two of my favorites are captured in the book – his abstract flights through molecular lights for the defunct Adventure Thru Inner Space and his one-eyed black cat for the Haunted Mansion. The latter has become a fabled Mansion character over the years. Atencio's fiendish feline would have followed guests throughout the ride, a creature said to despise living humans and with

George Savvas / Disney / TNS

Xavier "X" Atencio worked on Disneyland's original Pirates of the Caribbean.

predatory, possessive instincts.

In Atencio's concept art, the cat featured elongated, vampire-like fangs and a piercing red eye. In a nod to Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Black Cat," it had just one eyeball, which sat in its socket with all the subtlety of a fire alarm. Discarded eventually – a raven essentially fills a similar role – the cat today has been resurrected for the Mansion, most notably in a revised attic scene where the kitty is spotted near a mournful bride.

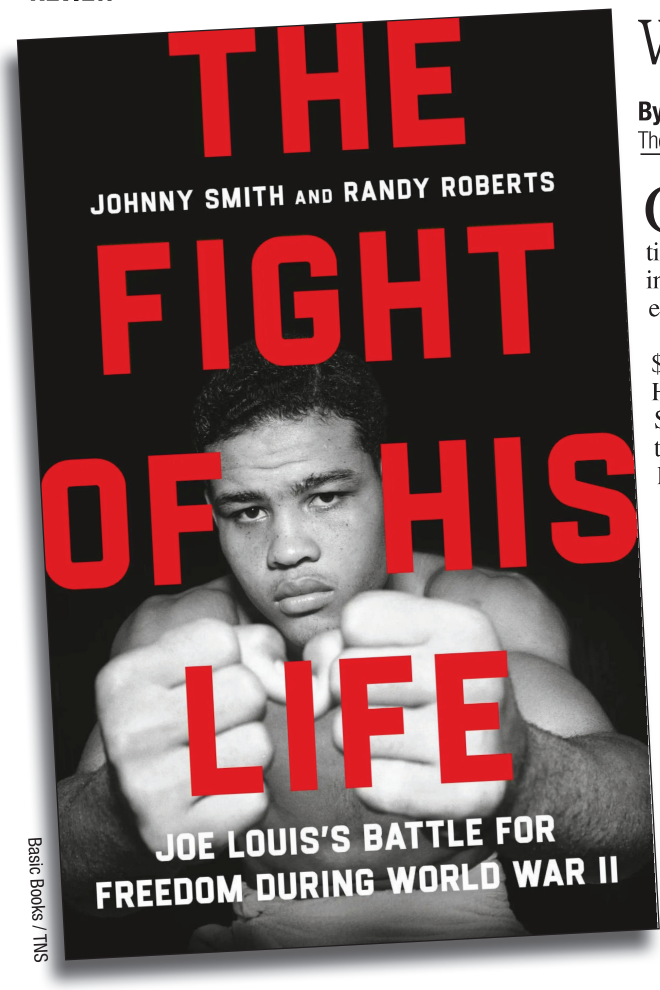
Co-author Bobbie Lucas, a relative of Atencio's colloquially referred to by the family as his "grandchild-in-law," was asked what ties all of Atencio's work together.

"No matter the different style or no matter the era, there's such a sense of life and humanity," Lucas says. "There's a sense of play."

Play is a fitting way to describe Atencio's contributions to two of Disneyland's most beloved attractions, where pirates and ghosts are captured at their most frivolous and jovial.

"I like that," Lucas adds. "I like someone who will put their heart on their sleeve and show you that in their art."

REVIEW



Basic Books / TNS

When Joe Louis battled 'The Fight of His Life': racism

By KEVIN CANFIELD
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

On Jan. 9, 1942, heavyweight champion Joe Louis won his 20th straight title defense, knocking out Buddy Baer in the first round. The next day, he enlisted in the Army.

For good measure, Louis donated his $47,000 boxing paycheck to the military. He was "a loyal American," Johnny Smith and Randy Roberts write in their terrific new biography, "The Fight of His Life," and in time he would be "the first prominent Black athlete turned activist."

Like previous biographies of the boxer, the book, subtitled "Joe Louis's Battle for Freedom During World War II," underscores his patriotism. But Smith and Roberts take the story further, discrediting the myth that Louis never spoke out against racism – a misperception that moved Muhammad Ali and others to chide him. In reality, "the war would test his beliefs." And as the global conflict entered its final act, "his experience in a segregated army sparked his political awakening."

To help us understand why this matters – and how Louis' largely forgotten public comments about bigotry influenced President Harry S. Truman's executive order ending segregation in the military – the authors vividly describe the central role he played in American life after winning the heavyweight title in 1937.

Though it's maybe a reach to describe him as "incontrovertibly" the era's best-known athlete – Babe Ruth and 1936 Olympic hero Jesse Owens were right there with him – Louis ruled what was then one of the nation's favorite sports. When he fought, one reporter wrote, "streets emptied, and commerce stopped and America huddled by its radios."

To Black Americans, he was a defining figure, a muse for writers Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, the last of whom regarded Louis' ring dominance as a rousing answer to "four centuries of repression."

Concentrating on 1942-45, Smith and Roberts recount Louis' recruitment for what amounted to a propaganda mission for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The U.S. armed forces were segregated, right down to different blood banks for white and Black soldiers. But sergeants Louis and "Sugar" Ray Robinson – the future welterweight champ was also in the Army – toured widely on the government's behalf, putting on boxing exhibitions and bucking up troop morale. Louis didn't see combat, because he was "more valuable to the War Department on a stage than in a foxhole."

Along the way, the authors write, Louis learned of racist attacks by white soldiers on their Black peers and saw numerous other instances of discrimination. After Black soldiers were barred from ringside seats at a match, he refused to box for troops if it happened again.

In one historic moment, he and Robinson rejected VIP bus seats, "effectively desegregating" transportation at a military base. In postwar speeches, he "urged Black Americans to fight for voting rights and demand full citizenship." Louis' calls for national unity were among many factors that compelled Truman to halt military segregation.

Ending their account in the 1950s means the authors don't have an opportunity to mention a famous Sports Illustrated article that appeared in 1985, four years after Louis' death. "Uncle Tom or revolutionary hero?" asked the cover story headline. Forty years later, Smith and Roberts supply the answer: Definitely not the former – and a whole lot closer to the latter than many people realize.

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

2026 Toyota RAV4's rare qualities are what make it so popular

By **LARRY PRINTZ**
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Toyota / TNS

Twenty-nine years ago, somewhere between the death of the station wagon and the rise of the electric pickup, the RAV4 debuted as an anomaly: a three-door SUV riding atop a car platform, with all-wheel drive and a Patagonia wardrobe. At the time, SUVs were little more than body-on-frame pickup trucks in different attire, with refinement to match. They were truly brutal off-road warriors.

Today, most new SUVs take their cues from the RAV4's trailblazing if well-mannered engineering. That means a unibody car-based platform with some light off-road capability. Once a maverick, the Toyota RAV4 is now mainstream, while such SUV icons as the Jeep Wrangler and Ford Bronco have become the outliers. And for 2026, the Toyota RAV4 has been redesigned as a hybrid or a plug-in hybrid, improbably rendering it a Prius for people who want to look capable. It lets you feel adventurous without ever breaking a sweat.

The standard 2026 Toyota RAV4 hybrid generates a respectable 226 horsepower and, for the first time, can send it all to the front wheels, which makes sense if you live somewhere flat and boring. If you insist on all-wheel-drive, you're rewarded with a whopping 10 extra horses, bringing the total to 236. Need more than that? The plug-in hybrid offers a far healthier 324 horsepower, with an electric-only range of 52 miles, so you can handle most daily driving without ever firing a piston. All-wheel drive remains standard on the plug-in hybrid because Toyota knows you'll tell people you need it, even if you live somewhere with two seasons: summer and road construction.

The 2026 Toyota RAV4 is offered in core LE, XLE and Limited; sporty SE, XSE and GR Sport; and off-road-flavored Woodland. Each of the variants – core, sporty, or off-road – get their own unique proboscis, while all RAV4s get the hybrid powertrain, except for the GR Sport, which comes with the plug-in hybrid. Others get the plug-in as an option. And while the Woodland seems adventurous, it's mostly aggressive wheel arches, off-road tires and a 0.3-inch higher ride height. It's a similar story for the GR Sport. It's connected to Toyota's Gazoo Racing division in the same way your Peloton connects you to actual cycling. Engineers say the GR Sport is more of an introduction to Toyota's GR brand, rather than a hardcore GR vehicle. But it's not unlike making oatmeal taste interesting. Certainly, chief engineer Yoshinori Futonagane had his heart in the right place. He was trying to instill the 2026 Toyota RAV4 with a bit of fun, a task about as difficult as finding a librarian who's wild.

Driving the RAV4 remains largely uneventful, which is part of its allure. It's not that it's dull. It just doesn't insist on being interesting. The steering feels light but accurate, the brakes are confident, and the suspension seems tuned by someone who understands that most of life's adventures involve potholes, not apexes. There's noticeable body lean while cornering, even in the GR Sport. But it's well-controlled and predictable. It's the kind of car that turns down the volume on the modern world.

Its chassis is a modified version of what was used before, but revised for its all-hybrid powertrain. And while it looks familiar, its wardrobe is all-new. Particularly appreciated is hood styling that makes it easy to place the vehicle on the road. It's helped by an instrument panel that's lower than last year, making outward visibility markedly better.

Toyota provided a pre-production unit to test drive, so interior fit and finish is hard to judge. However, the front thrones provide the requisite roominess, while the rear seats have adequate space provided front seat residents are kind to taller rear seat riders. Seats are wide and a bit flat, with modest side bolstering. Uniquely, the center console lid is dual hinged, opening towards either the driver or front-seat passenger. It also lifts entirely, and can be flipped over and secured so that you use its hard underside surface should you need it.

And there are any number of USB-C plugs, dual wireless phone charging, 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, a 10.5-inch infotainment screen or an available 12.9-inch touchscreen run by updated software that makes it one of the best in the business.

You'll never love the 2026 Toyota RAV4 Limited, not the way you loved that Mazda Miata, or that old Jeep Wrangler with the leaky roof. But when you're late for work, the weather's awful, and the world seems to be coming apart at the seams, the 2026 Toyota RAV4 Limited will still be there, ready to deliver you safely to wherever you need to be. And in 2026, that might be the greatest luxury of all: a car that asks for nothing, promises little, and never lets you down. Look for it in showrooms in time for winter.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

2026 Toyota RAV4 Limited AWD

Base price: To be announced

Powertrain: 2.5-liter four-cylinder gas-electric hybrid

Horsepower: 236

EPA rating (combined city/highway): 42 mpg

Fuel required: Regular unleaded

Length/Width/Height: 181/73/67 inches

Ground clearance: 8.1 inches

Payload: 1,075 pounds

Cargo capacity: 38-70 cubic feet

Towing capacity: 3,500 pounds

Stylish Honda Prelude changes gears for new hybrid generation

By **HENRY PAYNE**
The Detroit News (TNS)

Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

TOCHIGI, Japan — The last manual Honda Prelude Type SH coupe I drove was a 2001 model. Stylish and whip quick, I took it by the scruff of the neck and whipped it around Oakland County, rowing its high-revving VTEC engine with abandon.

The 2026 Honda Prelude is not that vehicle.

The sleek, all-new Prelude, which enthusiasts have been thirsting for since it wowed as a concept at the 2023 Los Angeles Auto Show, is a new coupe for a new Honda generation. It lives up to its name as a gateway to Honda's latest technology.

Where the last-generation Prelude was a performance brand halo pushing engine RPM and suspension limits (alongside the S2000 sports car), Prelude joins a 2026 model lineup already loaded with athletes: the manual pocket-rocket Civic Si and winged Civic Type R hot hatch. The Prelude's mission is less track rat and more grand tourer.

I got a sneak peak of Prelude before it hits dealer lots in January. I flogged it from the streets of Ann Arbor to Honda's test track here in Tochigi north of Tokyo, where the hot hatch proved itself unflappable (if less engaging than its predecessor) with an impressive 500 miles of range.

The 2001 'Lude was a shot of Red Bull; the 2026 model is a tasty latte.

Indeed, with the $42K Prelude and $46K Type R, Honda offers buyers $40K-something performance models with distinctive personalities, not unlike what Corvette has done with its E-Ray grand tourer and Z06 track rat at the, ahem, $110K price point.

Like the Z06 with a Z07 package, Type R lets known its intentions right away with a standard rear wing that arches from its back like a scorpion tail. With muscular fenders, black trim, hood scoop and three tailpipes out back, this Orca is ready to hunt.

Prelude, on the other hand, greets you with a dolphin smile.

Its thin, pleasant front grille integrates with equally thin headlights that sweep backward across a sloped hood. That hood gives way to a long, tapered hatchback making for a classic coupe profile that could pass for a mid-engine sports car. It stopped showgoers in their tracks on the '23 LA Show floor, and my white tester in Ann Arbor was no less grabbing.

A woman staying in Weber's Hotel (where I was testing Prelude for the North American Car of the Year jury) came out the front door and made a beeline for the 'Lude. "I want that car," she exclaimed.

Also like a mid-engine sports car, Prelude's big C-pillar comes with serous visibility issues. Pulling out of Weber's onto Jackson Avenue, the rear blind-spot was, well, blinding. Happily, Prelude comes loaded with safety features including blind-spot assist, adaptive cruise control, auto-braking, and so on. Maybe Honda could option a camera mirror like a Corvette C8?

Coupe also means Prelude's back seat is tougher to access than a Type R – or any other Civic for that matter. There's a reason that niche-coupes Prelude, Honda Accord Coupe, Nissan Altima Coupe, Eagle Talon, Infiniti Q60, Mercury Cougar, Chevy SS and Chevy Camaro have dropped away over the years, leaving few choices like the Prelude, BMW 2-series and Ford Mustang: practicality.

Need to seat four? Child seat access? Take the kids to school? The Prelude coupe is more limited than its sedan brethren, which is why even the former-coupe Civic Si has gone four-door. What Prelude does offer, however, is a huuuuge rear hatchback. Drop the rear seats and it gets even bigger.

For coupe buyers, that practicality will get the attention of, say, $40K Mustang Ecoboost shoppers who want hatchback room and rear seat comfort. The Prelude's five-inch shorter wheelbase than the Type R means just 32 inches of legroom, but that still beats the Ford (and Toyota GR Corolla hot hatch) by three inches.

Prelude doesn't have the pony car's natural rear-wheel-drive athleticism, but it's surprisingly nimble for a front-wheel-drive car because it shares the front suspension and Brembo brakes with the track-tastic Type R. Ooooooh.

At the end of a long straight on Honda's Tochigi, Japan, test track, I stomped 'Lude's 'Bos and we rotated nicely into a 90-degree hairpin. Credit torque-vectoring technology that brakes the inside front wheel, say Honda engineers, helping overcome the front-wheel-driver's natural tendency to push. (Hot tip: the formula will get even better in the next-gen Civic, which we had the privilege to test at Tochigi in camouflage.)

In 1997, our colleagues at Car and Driver crowned Prelude the best-handling car under $30,000 ($60K in today's dollars), beating out rear-wheel-drive hotties like the BMW 3-series, Chevrolet Camaro and Mazda Miata thanks to its similarly sophisticated front suspension, high-revving mill and precise manual gearbox.

As the torquey Prelude exited the hairpin turn, I stomped on the right pedal, and ... what's this, no manual?

If you want to row a box, get the Type R or Si. Prelude is here as prelude to Honda's hybrid future. The Japanese brand is going all in on hybrids (like its cross-Tokyo rival Toyota) with a target of being all-EV in 2040. Not only does sixth-gen Prelude not have a manual, it doesn't even have a gearbox, as twin electric motors translate engine power to the wheels like a single-speed EV transmission.

It's a drive system but behaves like an automatic tranmsission with synthetic shifts. Expect a low six-second 0-60 mph dash, which beats a Civic Si (6.6) but trails the 315-horsepower Type R's 4.9 secs, or the 315-horse Mustang Eco-Boost's 4.5.

Honda recognizes the visceral void left by a stick shift, and fills it with ... more tech!

'Lude introduces a nifty feature called S+ Shift – you can't miss the American game-show button in the middle of the console – that is meant to impersonate a geared transmission. Your speed freak reviewer frequently punched the big S+ Shift button.

I'll take SIMULATED ELECTRONIC FEATURES for $42,000, Alex!

S+ Shift nicely approximated an eight-speed gearbox as I tore around the Tochigi Proving Grounds (and Ann Arbor's Huron River Drive). Simulated upshifts were crisp and downshifts were rev-matched like a manual transmission. I used the steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters, which even simulated bouncing off a rev-limiter if revved to high. Comical that.

Cruising Ann Arbor's morning traffic, I was content with the "trigger-shifter" console shifter ripped right out of Honda's Acura luxury cars. It's another indication of the Prelude's upscale, tech-focused vibe relative to boy toy Type R.

My tester's two-tone salt 'n' pepper cabin echoed that sophistication. Paired with Civic's already appealing honeycomb dash and digital displays, it's an interior where you can comfortably spend hours on the road.

Hours on track? A used, low-mileage 2001 Prelude Type SH stick shift will set you back about $20K.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2026 Honda Prelude
★★★

Vehicle type: Front-wheel-drive, four-passenger sport coupe

Price: $42,000 (est.)

Powerplant: 2.0-liter, inline-4 cylinder mated to two electric motors

Power: 200 horsepower, 232 pound-feet torque

Transmission: Direct drive with S+ Shift

Performance: 0-60 mph, 6.2 seconds (est.); top speed, 126 mph

Weight: NA

Range: EPA est. mpg, NA. Est. 500 mile range.

Report card

Highs: Head turning looks; S+ Shift

Lows: Smaller back seat than Civic; blind spot the size of Rhode Island

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Hearing aids improve voice clarity, ... but take some getting used to

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Ceretone has announced the immediate availability of its Core One Pro over-the-counter, FDA-compliant hearing aids. Designed for individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss, the Core One Pros are prescription-free and could help restore clarity, confidence and connection in everyday life.

With an ultra-discreet design and weighing just 0.035 ounces each, the app-free Core One Pro hearing aids offer a comfortable and nearly invisible solution.

Like true wireless earbuds, they store and charge in a portable case, so they are always ready to use. Once in your ears, they are prepared to go since they turn on automatically, giving you a "power on" prompt.

They have four modes: standard, restaurant, outdoor and tinnitus masking. The modes are changed by tapping on the end of the hearing aid, which then alerts you with a prompt indicating the current mode. The modes can also be changed with a button on the charging case. Adjusting the volume is also done with the hearing aids in the case.

Overall, the Core One Pros are lightweight, have an ergonomic angled fit and are easy to wear. They fit in your ear canal and are mostly hidden. They are touted as "virtually invisible," and I would agree with that. You can see the thread and pull tab outside your ear, but the rest of the hearing aid is entirely inside.

To ensure the most comfortable fit, several different-sized sets of soft tips are included. They came preloaded with the smaller-sized tips. The manual recommends switching to a larger size if you hear whistling or to a smaller size if you find them hard to insert.

Overall, I liked them, but they do take some getting used to if you've never worn hearing aids before. Ceretone recommends wearing them for a few hours a day during the first week, then gradually increasing the time you wear them so that within 1-3 months, you'll be used to them.

What I first noticed was the sounds of my shoes hitting the ground as I walked and the doors opening and closing much more than before. It's like having a small speaker in your ear to magnify the sound, and it does seem to magnify some sounds more than others. That takes some getting used to, especially if you haven't noticed those sounds for a long time. The biggest plus was how much clearer I heard voices while wearing the Core One Pros.

Ceretone Core One Pro over-the-counter, FDA-compliant hearing aids.
Ceretone / TNS

The hearing aids come with the charging case, a set of S-M-L ear tips, and a cleaning tool. A single charge will yield up to 20 hours of use, and the charging case will provide three additional recharges. They have an IP66 water and dust-resistant rating.

https://ceretone.com/products/core-one-pro-otc-hearing-aids, $389.99

Seenda's new full-sized KUW01 7-Color Backlit Wired Ergonomic Keyboard really has it all when it comes to keyboard features.

Obviously, what's most important for a keyboard is the feel and comfort, especially for all-day use, and the KUW01 has it all. After a few weeks of use, the comfort is as good as any I've tried, thanks to the ergonomic curved split layout that enforces a more natural hand positioning. The typing is smooth, comfortable and quiet.

It also features a soft wrist support and one of my favorite features, multi-device connectivity. It allows devices such as a keyboard to connect to multiple devices through Bluetooth.

Now, with the press of a button, you can be writing on your computer. If you look over to your smartphone and have a message needing a reply, the keyboard can instantly work to reply there. And then it can instantly go back to your computer screen.

The new keyboard from Seenda, featuring well-spaced water-drop-shaped keys, is compatible with both Mac and Windows operating systems, with dedicated keyboard layouts printed directly on the keys for each system.

The keyboard features customizable lighting with backlit keys, offering seven color choices (white, red, yellow, green, cyan, blue, purple) and three brightness levels (low, medium, high, off). You can set the color and brightness levels to your room's atmosphere or the needed visibility.

There is a separate number keypad on the right, adjustable tilt legs with three angles and programmable multimedia shortcut keys. The 2-in-1 wired connection has plug-and-play functionality with both USB-A and USB-C.

The three-layered pillow wrist rest is constructed with a layer of soft synthetic leather, high-density support and a layer of memory foam. A protective silicone keyboard cover is included.

https://www.seenda.com/collections/keyboards-mice/products/seenda-kuw01-wired-ergonomic-split-keyboard-7-color-backlit, $69.99

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Seenda KUW01 keyboard.
Seenda / TNS

Should you opt for a Chromebook?

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I received an email this week from a reader who wants me to compare Chromebooks to Windows laptops for a recent college grad to use for a job search. Specifically, they'd like to know the limitations of cloud storage and the ability to create documents and print, as well as a cost break down.

Everyone is familiar with Windows laptops, so let's concentrate on the capabilities and costs involved with a Chromebook, which is a laptop that runs Google's Chrome Operating System.

There are some big differences in how ChromeOS works vs. Windows.

If you ask most people what they know about Chromebooks, and they'll say they are a cheaper alternative to a Mac or Windows laptop. If you search Amazon, you can find many sub-$200 Chromebooks, while most cheaper Windows laptops are in the $300-$500 range.

Most Chromebooks have much less onboard storage because most of the applications and documents are stored in Google's cloud. They also don't need as powerful a CPU or as much RAM.

Chromebooks use Google's free Chrome operating system, and a suite of free, web-based office apps like Google Docs and Google Sheets instead of Microsoft Word and Excel. Free is good, and if that's the kind of work you'll need to do, and you're OK with the concept of working from the cloud, then a Chromebook could be a good way to save some money.

Where Chromebooks have issues is the lack the power to run apps like the Adobe Creative Suite or a lot of games. If you need that functionality, you'll need to find online alternatives.

Chromebooks are also very secure and reliable. Malware on ChromeOS is extremely rare. They can also be very light and fast with great battery life. They are quick to boot and wake from sleep.

What can you do with a Chromebook?

For a new grad starting a job search, they'll have no problem creating a resume in the Google Docs word processor online. They'll also have no issues searching for jobs online or filling out online applications. They'll also be able to connect most consumer printers and peripherals like keyboards and mice, cameras and external monitors.

A Chromebook would also be handy for video meetings and online job interviews. They're also great for consuming web content like watching Netflix or YouTube videos. You can also download and run most Android apps and games.

But I don't want to undersell Windows or Mac laptops. A few weeks ago I reviewed an inexpensive Windows 11 laptop, the Aspire Go 15 (AG15-32P-39R2), that can still be bought from Amazon for less than $300.

Also, if you or your kids are in college or just graduated, there may be a discount on laptops from companies like Apple. Finally, don't overlook student discounts on hardware from college bookstores.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossman techadviser@gmail.com.

TECH REVIEW

Dangbei MP1 Max brings 4K clarity to your home theater or backyard movie night

The Dangbei MP1 Max projector.
Dangbei / TNS

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I really wish I had room in my house for a proper home theater, but my wife and I live in a smallish place without an open expanse of wall to put up a big screen.

So if I want to use a projector for movie nights or to watch a big game, I have to pull out a portable screen and set up a projector.

Lately I've been testing out a very bright and very sharp 4K laser projector from Dangbei called the MP1 Max, which retails for $1,999 but can usually be had at a lower price if you look around (try us.dangbei.com or Amazon).

The MP1 Max is a true self-contained home theater, but it is also portable.

It ships in a molded Styrofoam carrying case about the size of a portable typewriter.

Hardware specs

The triple laser LED projection system has a brightness of 3,100 lumens and a 4K resolution of 3,840 by 2,160 pixels. The MP1 Max is built on a 360-degree rotating and tilting stand, which is perfect for easy positioning on a wall or even your ceiling. (Yes, projecting on a bedroom ceiling for in-bed watching is a thing.)

The high lumen rating means you can still see a clear and bright image even in a room with uncovered windows.

The projector can provide an image from 40 inches to 300 inches, but Dangbei says the image will be better if you stay under 150 inches. The larger you make the image, the darker you need to make the room. To help with the math, 150 inches is a 13-foot diagonal image.

If you like gaming, the MP1 Max has a 240Hz refresh rate (at 1,080P), which means better responsiveness and less lag while playing games.

The MP1 Max also has a built-in sound system with two 12-watt speakers with Dolby DTS that sound surprisingly great. The sound can also be routed through a 3.5mm headphone jack or wirelessly through Bluetooth.

Video inputs for the MP1 Max include two HDMI ports (one with ARC) and you can also cast video from a phone, tablet or computer if you're on the same network.

Speaking of network, the projector has Wi-Fi 6, and you can use Ethernet through a USB-A to Ethernet adapter.

Software specs

The heart of the MP1 Max is the Google TV operating system, which includes a licensed Netflix app. Google TV also includes apps for Apple TV, Prime Video, Hulu, YouTube and YouTube TV, DirectTV Stream and thousands of other apps.

The on-board speakers make the MP1 Max a great choice to take to the backyard for outdoor movie night. Just string an extension cord out to your back yard and connect the projector to your home's Wi-Fi or the hotspot on your phone and you're all set for watching any online streaming service you like

You can cast video or mirror your screen from Windows, Macintosh, iOS or Android as long as you're on the same network.

Setup

The MP1 Max uses artificial intelligence to help you get the best picture for your particular situation.

During the setup you will go through auto-focus, auto keystone correction, screen fit and obstacle avoidance. The projector is also watching to see if you are passing through the image and if it senses your eyes looking at the light, it'll dim things down to project your eyes.

The entire show is run from the included slim remote control with buttons to quickly launch Netflix, Prime Video and YouTube. There's also a microphone in the remote where you can control the Google TV OS with your voice.

In use

I found the MP1 Max easy to set up and use. The longest part was getting it powered up and on my Wi-Fi network and then having to sign into all my subscription services.

It has the brightness and resolution to be your main TV in a home theater, but it's also portable enough to toss in the car and take it on the road.

The projector weighs a little over 12 pounds, so you're not just tossing it in your backpack, but the carrying case makes toting it around a bit easier.

If you will be setting up a proper home theater, you'll want to think about a separate sound system. Having built-in speakers is great for a meeting or backyard movies, but you'll want the sound coming from the screen when you're watching movies at home. A surround system would really pair well with the MP1 Max.

I was completely impressed with the quality of the video from all sources.

I'm convinced one of my future houses will have a room big enough for a home theater, but until then a projector like the MP1 Max does its job beautifully and then packs away neatly.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser @gmail.com.

HOME & GARDEN

Trends evolve in response to how people live. They often start in other creative artforms such as music, fashion and art.

Crodenberg/Dreamstime / TNS

DESIGN RECIPES

Enduring design trends

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Interior design helps shape environments where we work and live. As lifestyles change, designers must design and adapt spaces.

From a reduced focus on pure aesthetics to an increased focus on sustainability and function, today's design trends are less about following fads and more about creating homes that are purposeful, thoughtful and well-designed.

How trends evolve

Trends evolve in response to how people live. They often start in other creative artforms such as music, fashion and art. What we see on the fashion runway often trickles down into home décor. In recent years, we've seen design become more about wellness, sustainability and function.

Biggest trend of 2025

The biggest trend of 2025 is luxury design that isn't necessarily expensive but looks expensive. Well-made products that are also well-designed can help make a room feel both luxurious and elevated. Rich textures and textiles, subtle color palettes, well-made upholstery pieces, and relaxed, natural materials are considered both modern and timeless.

Current trends

There's been a noticeable shift toward warmth and authenticity in interiors. Natural, relaxed materials, tactile finishes and earthy tones such as camel, clay, moss green and creamy whites are taking center stage. Clients and designers have made a move toward comfort, seeking livable spaces that feel curated, yet approachable. I'm also seeing a return to craftsmanship as well as handwoven textiles, artisan lighting and bespoke furniture pieces to add customization to a space.

What customers want from interior designers

Clients are asking for homes that feel personal, timeless and easy to live in. Today's homeowner is seeking a home that can be "lived in" as opposed to having unused rooms such as formal living rooms or guest rooms that are just "on display." Today's customer wants spaces that are beautiful but also functional. There's also a huge interest in natural and sustainable materials: linen, rattan, wood and stone. With people spending less time at work and more and more time at home, people want spaces that feel comfortable as opposed to "stuffy" and overly styled.

Interior design trends that are timeless

Neutral color palettes, layered textures and natural materials have stood the test of time because they work in any environment and can evolve with small updates and blend well with nearly any decor. Classic design foundations, solid lighting, balance and proportion will never go out of style.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

How should I clean my windows?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

When your windows sparkle, your whole home shines. Clean windows make a powerful first impression and let in more light, which can brighten every room and lift your spirits. But dirty windows? They dull the view, block sunlight and can even make a freshly cleaned house feel less inviting. With the holidays here and temperatures dipping, now is the perfect time to give your windows a little love before winter sets in.

Ksenia Zatevakhina / Dreamstime / TNS

The basics of window cleaning are simple. A bucket of warm water, a few drops of dish soap, and a sturdy squeegee go a long way toward a streak-free shine.

The basics of window cleaning are simple. A bucket of warm water, a few drops of dish soap, and a sturdy squeegee go a long way toward a streak-free shine. If you live in a one-story home, you can probably handle the job yourself in an afternoon. Just remember to start with the shadiest side of your house to prevent the sun from drying the cleaner too quickly and leaving streaks behind.

Things get trickier once you start climbing ladders. Second-story window cleaning brings real risks. You are balancing on a ladder with slippery hands and soapy water, often tempted to lean just a little farther to reach the next pane. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than half a million ladder injuries occur every year, and many of those happen at home. A fall from even a modest height can cause serious harm, so think carefully before you climb.

That is why many homeowners call in a professional window cleaner. A pro brings skill, safety training and the right tools for the job. On average, professional window cleaning costs around $220 for a typical home. That fee covers much more than elbow grease. Experienced cleaners know how to handle delicate windows, such as leaded, stained or vintage glass, without causing damage. They also spot early warning signs of trouble, such as cracks, failing seals or water leaks, before those issues grow into costly repairs.

If you hire a pro, provide detailed information to get an accurate quote. Be ready to share the number and size of your windows, their types and any challenges that might make them harder to reach, such as steep landscaping or built-in screens. It is also wise to ask whether the pro includes interior and exterior cleaning or only one side of the glass.

Before you sign a contract, check that your window cleaner is licensed, bonded and insured. This is especially important for work done on ladders. Proper insurance ensures you are protected if someone is injured on your property or if any part of your home is accidentally damaged. Reputable companies will happily provide proof of insurance and references from recent customers.

If you are set on doing it yourself, follow every ladder safety rule. Use a ladder tall enough for the job and never stand on the top rungs. Have a friend hold the base for extra stability. Keep your tools in a bucket attached to the ladder rather than trying to balance them in your hands. Take your time and move the ladder instead of reaching too far to one side.

For an easier long-term solution, consider upgrading to modern replacement windows that tilt inward for cleaning. These designs let you wash both sides of the glass safely from inside your home. Many double-hung windows include this convenient feature.

And if you are getting your home ready for guests, it is smart to schedule window cleaning before freezing temperatures arrive. Once the weather turns cold, outdoor cleaning becomes harder, and streaks or residue are more likely to form. Clean, clear windows will let all that winter light pour in and make your home feel bright and welcoming for guests.

Clean windows do more than boost curb appeal. They help your home look cared for and give you a fresh outlook, quite literally. Whether you tackle the job yourself or bring in a pro, taking care of your windows now will help you see your home in the best possible light.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

TRAVEL

Photos courtesy of Dreamstime / TNS

Breckenridge, Colorado.

Under-the-radar small towns for fall trips

By NOREEN KOMPANIK
TravelPulse (TNS)

Fall is one of the favorite times of the year for getaways and scenic road trips, especially for those looking for some colorful foliage, crunchy leaves and a more intimate autumn escape.

Small towns offer the ideal blend of natural beauty and local culture, each providing its own unique charm and experiences. And the best part is that these storybook destinations not only come with cozy inns and B&Bs, hot cider and pumpkin patches, they offer all the magic of fall without the craowds.

Montpelier, Vermont

Located in America's smallest state, Montpelier, the capital of Vermont nestled in the Green Mountains offers small-town charm, rich history, and a quintessential New England feel. The town is intimate and walkable with much of the downtown architecture dating back to the 1800s and early 1900s creating a preserved, timeless ambience. There are no chain stores here, rather, locally owned bookstores, cafes, artisan shops and a thriving art scene.

In-town Hubbard Park offers forested hiking trails and a stone observation tower; the Winooski River flows right through the town adding a peaceful backdrop and scenic Smugglers Notch State Park is only 24 minutes away.

Leavenworth, Washington

Autumn brings magic to this Bavarian-style village with alpine charm, colorful foliage and festive fall celebrations. Oktoberfest takes over in autumn with music, food and festivities that feel so authentic, you'd feel like you're in a real Bavarian town. Leavenworth is full of specialty German-style bakeries, beer gardens, and authentic food specialties. The town even sports a nutcracker museum.

Leavenworth is tucked into the Cascade Mountains and surrounded by forest, rivers and trails – a good base for outdoor lovers. The area around the town offers gorgeous scenic drives with vibrant fall colors through winding forested mountain roads.

Galena, Illinois

The photogenic Midwest gem in northwest Illinois is filled with 19 th century architecture, hilly streets and Mississippi River and breathtaking views. At its height in the mid-1800s, the town was a bustling river port between St. Louis and St. Paul. As river commerce and the once profitable lead mining declined, so did the town's economy. However, many of its historic buildings survived, most in the Galena Historic District and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Main Street features dozens of boutiques, antique stores, art galleries, bed and breakfast, charming inns and tasting rooms. One of the best times to visit is the fall offering a vibrant array of autumn colors across the Mississippi River Valley with scenic overlooks and small-town festivities.

Hood River, Oregon

With the backdrop of the picturesque Columbia River Gorge, Hood River is a Pacific Northwest treasure, especially in the fall when the town transforms into a kaleidoscope of vibrant color.

Crisp air and harvest-time charm make this a favorite getaway destination that also offers breathtaking drives through vine maple-lined forests. One of the favorite fall experiences is a scenic ride on the Mt. Hood Railroad's Harvest Train, venturing through the countryside, showcasing autumn hues and offering themed experiences like Oktoberfest.

Eureka Springs, Arkansas

With the stunning backdrop of the Ozark Mountains, Victorian architecture and winding streets, this Southern hub is a hidden fall treasure.

From mid-October to early November, the Ozark Mountains burst into brilliant reds, oranges and golds, making it one of Arkansas's most picturesque seasonal destinations. The town's shops, galleries and cafes offer warm hospitality and seasonal treats, and as always, the thriving art scene in Eureka should not be missed.

Breckenridge, Colorado

Though this Colorado Rockies mountain town is well-known as a winter destination for skiing and snow activities, autumn is one of the most beautiful times of the year, when the aspens turn golden and "quake" when gentle breezes blow through the branches.

The historic town located 80 miles west of Denver was founded in 1859 during the California Gold Rush. Today, the 19 th century Victorian mining town sports carefully preserved structures, charming colorful boutique shops, art galleries and a myriad of restaurants. The easily walkable town also offers a free downtown shuttle making it convenient to get around this fun and fascinating hamlet.

Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania

Nicknamed the "Switzerland of America," this scenic town nestled in the Pocono Mountains offers breathtaking views year-round, but autumn is especially magical.

The town is surrounded by vibrant forests, and the Lehigh Gorge State Park offers excellent hiking, biking and whitewater rafting. Originally named Mauch Chunk, the village was renamed Jim Thorpe in 1954 to honor its hometown Olympic athlete. Downtown features preserved Victorian buildings, cobblestone streets in an easily walkable area. The Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway offers seasonal train rides through the colorful gorge, especially popular during the Fall Foliage Festival.

Helen, Georgia

A visit to Helen is like experiencing the magic of Bavaria. The Alpine village about 90 miles northeast of Atlanta and situated on the Chattahoochee River is renowned for its alpine charm, outdoor adventures and festive atmosphere- especially in the fall.

Helen was transformed in the 1960s from a declining logging town into a picturesque replica of a small German village. Today, its cobblestone streets, timber-framed buildings and colorful facades make it a beloved destination in the Southeast. The town hosts one of the longest-running Oktoberfests in the U.S. with German music, dancing, bratwurst and beer flowing through the festhalle from mid-September to late October.

Lake Placid, New York

Famous for hosting the Winter Olympics in 1932 and 1980, Lake Placid is a picturesque alpine village in the Adirondacks renowned for its stunning natural beauty and year-round outdoor adventures.

Autumn brings crisp mountain air, vibrant foliage and a cozy village charm ideal for a seasonal retreat. Due to its location in the High Peaks region, Lake Placid boasts one of the best places to experience peak foliage when the panoramic Adirondacks are blanketed in color, best experienced by scenic drives along the Whiteface Veterans' Memorial Highway, exploring hiking trails or paddling around serene Mirror Lake.

Camden, Maine

One of New England's most scenic autumn escapes, Camden is a postcard-perfect coastal town known for its scenic harbor, mountain views and charming downtown. Camden's iconic slogan 'Where the Mountains Meet the Sea' fits this town to a T given its bustling harbor with panoramic views of Penobscot Bay and Camden Harbor.

With lighthouses and small islands, hiking opportunities to Mount Battie for sweeping views of the town and bay, hills ablaze with color, boutique shops, art galleries and historic buildings along Main Street, Camden makes for an ideal fall getaway. And aside from its seasonal menus highlighting Maine's fall harvest, there's always lobster.

For more, visit travelpulse.com.

Downtown Galena, Illinois.